

Section 11-1: Advice and Guidance to the Sangha

In this section we are going to see how the Buddha guided and trained his disciples, for their wellbeing and development in spiritual journey. Some of the most significant pieces of Dhamma will be discussed here.

The way the Buddha paid special attention to the spiritual growth of his congregation—the Sangha—is something that can be seen throughout the Tripitaka admonishing them at appropriate times, showing them the ropes of the spiritual life without leaving anything out and guiding them with compassion towards liberation from worldly suffering. It was a unique and admirable quality of a great spiritual leader.

The best evidence of this is that even today, some 2,560 years after the Buddha's great Parinibbana, the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One is still practiced properly by his monastic disciples and the Dhamma is flourishing in the present-day world!

▲ Freedom to Follow

The methods and techniques used by the Buddha in guiding and training his disciples are wonderful. One of the most striking features is the freedom of entry into and exit from the Monastic order. We can see throughout the Buddha's dispensation; that his disciples have taken the monastic vows of their own free will. The Buddha has shown that his teachings are '*ehipassika*'—come and see—so the disciples are free to follow or disrobe! Many of the early disciples of the Buddha's order were students of other religious leaders, or people who followed other philosophies or views. In most cases, they have seen the Blessed One, heard the Dhamma, become inspired by his wisdom and compassion and thus established faith in him. Similarly, if someone is not interested in living the monastic life or does not have the strength to continue, there is no obstacle to disrobe and return to lay life. However, for the welfare of other students, the Buddha has advised that proper steps should be taken to remove those who do not behave in accordance with Vinaya rules.



The Buddha Teaching monks: Picture courtesy Gettyimages

▲ To Follow the Middle Way—The Noble Eightfold Path

The Buddha often expressed to the Sangha his own experience in seeking the truth—an escape from worldly suffering. As a prince from royal family, he had all the pleasures of the

world (see: section 1 & 2) so he understood how sensuality bonds a person to the worldly life. Then as an ascetic, he practiced extreme austere practices thinking it would lead him to Enlightenment. Finally, through his wisdom and effort he achieved freedom from suffering (see Sections 3 & 4). Hence, the Blessed One advised his disciples: not to be indulge in sensual pleasures, nor follow extreme practices that torment the body which will lead to a disturb mind. The following extracts from scriptures, show us the importance of the middle path.

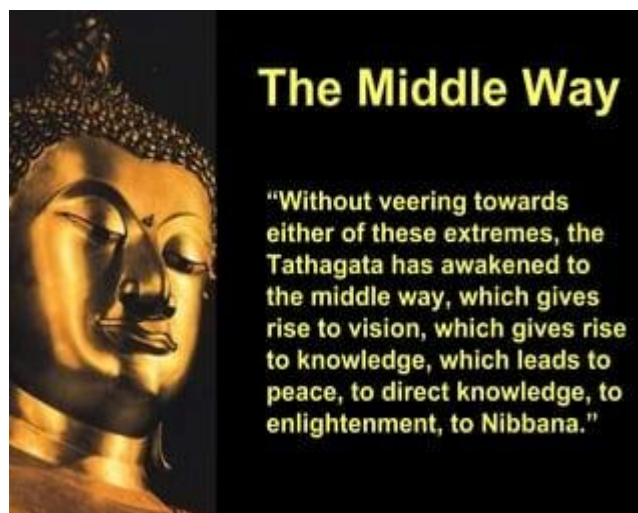
“...bhikkhus, ...I strove indefatigably... ‘willingly, let only my skin, sinews, and bones remain, and let the flesh and blood dry up in my body, but I will not relax my energy so long as I have not attained what can be attained by manly strength, energy, and exertion.’ It was by heedfulness that I achieved enlightenment, bhikkhus; it was by heedfulness that I achieved the unsurpassed security from bondage...”ⁱ

Then he encouraged the Middle way:

“Bhikkhus, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth into homelessness. What two? The pursuit of sensual happiness in sensual pleasures, which is low, vulgar, the way of worldlings, ignoble, unbeneficial; and the pursuit of self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, unbeneficial. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata has awakened to the middle way, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna...”ⁱⁱ

“Enamoured with their pleasures and wealth,
Greedy, dazed by sensual pleasures,
They do not realize they have gone too far
Like deer that enter the trap laid out.

Quote from: SN: 3:6.



Picture Courtesy: <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/dhammacakkappavattana-sutta>

▲ Importance of Meditation Practice—Samadhi

Here we would like to present the following quote from Bhikkhu Bodhi regarding why meditation is important for spiritual development.

“The methods of meditation taught by the Buddha in the Pali Canon fall into two broad systems. One is the development of serenity (samatha), which aims at concentration (samādhi); the other is the development of insight (vipassanā), which aims at understanding or wisdom (paññā). In the Buddha’s system of mental training the role of serenity is subordinated to that of insight because the latter is the crucial instrument needed to uproot the ignorance at the bottom of saṃsāric bondage. The attainments possible through serenity meditation were known to Indian contemplatives long before the advent of the Buddha. The Buddha himself mastered the two highest stages under his early teachers but found that, on their own, they only led to higher planes of rebirth, not to genuine enlightenment (MN 26.15–16). However, because the unification of mind induced by the practice of concentration contributes to clear understanding, the Buddha incorporated the techniques of serenity meditation and the resulting levels of absorption into his own system, treating them as a foundation and preparation for insight and as a “pleasant abiding here and now...”

Quote from Bhikkhu Bodhi (MN: Introduction)

♦ Commending Meditation

In his teaching the Blessed One often pointed out that Samadhi and wisdom go hand in hand. Therefore, he emphasised meditation and urged the Sangha to meditate and achieve stillness of the mind. He often pointed out that the final liberation cannot be perceived by those who are immersed in lust, hate and delusion. Rather, through deep meditation all desires could be abandoned and freedom achieved.



Picture courtesy: <https://declutterthemind.com/>

♦ Meditation is Important for Spiritual Enhancement

In the following sutta we can further see how the Blessed One pointed out the importance of meditation—Samadhi—stillness of mind for spiritual growth.

“...bhikkhus, the safe and good path to be travelled joyfully has been reopened by me, the wrong path has been closed off, the decoy removed, the dummy destroyed...what should be done for his disciples out of compassion by a teacher who seeks their welfare and has compassion for them, that I have done for you, bhikkhus. There are these roots of trees, these empty huts. Meditate, bhikkhus, do not delay or else you will regret it later. This is our instruction to you.”ⁱⁱⁱ.

Importance of Samadhi and wisdom for spiritual development

There is no samadhi in one who lacks wisdom,
nor is there wisdom in him who lacks samadhi.

In whom are both samadhi and wisdom,
he is in the presence of nibbāna.

Dhp: 372.

♦Meditation is the Direct Path to Eliminate Suffering

In MN:10 (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta) and DN:22 (Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta) the Buddha pointed out to his disciples that the four foundations of mindfulness meditation would guide them towards the breakthrough:

“Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realisation of Nibbāna—namely, the four foundations of mindfulness...”^{iv}

♦Deep Meditation—Attainment of Jhānas Blindfolds Māra

The following extract shows how the Buddha urged the Sangha to attain samadhi—deep meditation in order to overcome all evil:

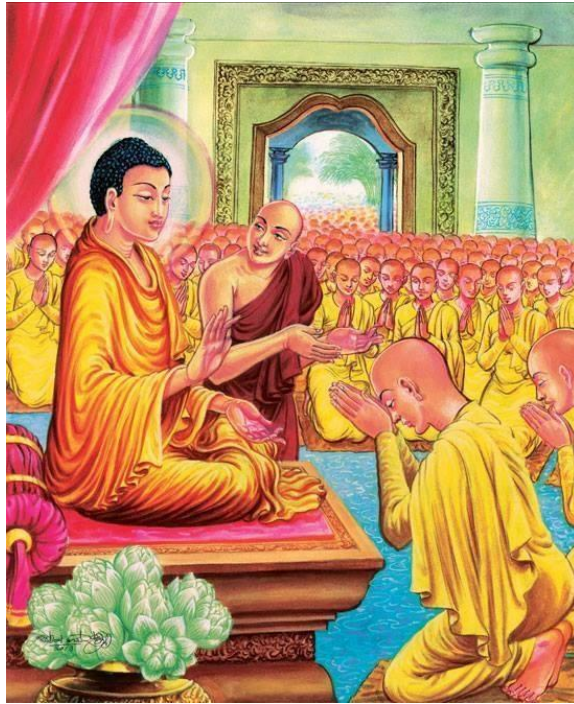
“Suppose a forest deer is wandering in the forest wilds: he walks... stands...sits... lies down confidently. Why is that? Because he is out of the hunter’s range. So too, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhāna... second jhāna... third jhāna... fourth jhāna...This bhikkhu is said to have blindfolded Māra, to have become invisible to the Evil One by depriving Māra’s eye of its opportunity”.^v

♦ Meditation Brings Five Kinds of Knowledge

The Buddha said when a bhikkhu/bhikkhuni being alert and mindful, develops samadhi which is measureless (*appamāṇanm*), then five kinds of knowledge arise:

“...five kinds of knowledge arise that are personally yours. What five? (1) The knowledge arises that is personally yours: ‘This samadhi is presently pleasant and in the future has a pleasant result.’ (2) ...This samadhi is noble and spiritual.’ (3) ...This samadhi is not practiced by low persons.’ (4) ...This samadhi is peaceful and sublime, gained by full tranquilization, and attained to unification; it is not reined in and checked by forcefully suppressing (5) ... ‘I enter this mindfully and I emerge from it mindfully.”^{vi}

Note: the measureless samadhi is gaining the four divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*). In some places it is described as the destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion (See: AN: Notes: 992)



The Buddha advising nuns: picture courtesy:

<https://www.finalonline.store/?path=page/ggitem&ggpid=273255>

▲ The Way to Recognize what is the Teaching of the Buddha

In the following suttas the Blessed One taught his disciples how to recognize the true Dhamma—the teaching of the Buddha which would guide them to avoid any pitfalls while walking on the spiritual path.

♦ The Buddha Taught Eight Criteria to Recognise the True Dhamma— his Teachings

The following was addressed to bhikkhuni Maha Prajapati Gotami (formerly Buddha’s step mother):

“Gotamī, those things of which you might know: ‘These things lead (1) to passion, not to dispassion; (2) to bondage, not to detachment; (3) to building up, not to dismantling; (4) to strong desires, not to fewness of desires; (5) to non-contentment, not to contentment; (6) to company, not to solitude; (7) to laziness, not to the arousing of energy; (8) to being difficult to support, not to being easy to support,’ you should definitely recognize: ‘This is not the Dhamma; this is not the discipline; this is not the teaching of the Teacher.’ But, Gotamī, those things of which you might know: ‘These things lead (1) to dispassion, not to passion; (2) to detachment, not to bondage; (3) to dismantling, not to building up; (4) to fewness of desires, not to strong desires; (5) to contentment, not to non-contentment; (6) to solitude, not [281] to company; (7) to the arousing of energy, not to laziness; (8) to being easy to support, not to being difficult to support,’ you should definitely recognize: ‘This is the Dhamma; this is the discipline; this is the teaching of the Teacher’”^{vii}

* In the following sutta the Blessed One also showed Venerable Upali the way to recognise the True Dhamma:

“Upāli, those things which you might know thus: ‘These things do not lead exclusively to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to nibbāna,’ you should definitely recognize: ‘This is not the Dhamma; this is not the discipline; this is not the teaching of the Teacher.’ But those things which you might know thus: ‘These things lead exclusively to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to nibbāna,’ you should definitely recognize: ‘This is the Dhamma; this is the discipline; this is the teaching of the Teacher.’”^{viii}

▲ Full Understanding of Vital Factors Leads to Spiritual Development

Often the Blessed One advised his disciples to gain full understanding of sensuality, form and feelings. When one understands them properly—as it is—the reality of uselessness of them would surface. So, when one understood them fully, one is able to be free from suffering. The following sutta elaborates on this point:

* On one occasion, a number of bhikkhus on their way for alms met wanderer of the other sects who said to them:

“Friends, the recluse Gotama describes the full understanding of sensual pleasures... material form... feelings, and we do so too. What then is the distinction here, friends, what is the variance, what is the difference between the recluse Gotama’s teaching of the Dhamma and ours, between his instructions and ours?”^{ix}

Then the Bhikkhus approached the Buddha and described their encounter with the wanderer of the other sect. The Buddha explained:

“Bhikkhus, wanderers of other sects who speak thus should be questioned thus: ‘But, friends, what is the gratification, what is the danger, and what is the escape in the case of sensual pleasures?... material form? feelings?’ being questioned thus, wanderers of other sects will fail to account for the matter... why is that? because it is not their province... those recluses... who do not understand as it actually is the gratification as gratification, the danger as danger, and the escape as escape in the case of sensual pleasures... material form ... feelings, can either themselves fully understand feelings or instruct another so that he can fully understand feelings—that is impossible... but those recluses... who understand as it actually is the gratification as gratification, the danger as danger, and the escape as escape ... can either themselves fully understand ... or instruct another so that he can fully understand (them) —that is possible.”^x

Note: In this sutta the Blessed One gave a detail description of the gratification, the danger, and how to escape from them.

* In MN: 26 (Ariyapariyesanā Sutta) the Blessed One advised his disciples how to be free from sensual pleasures:

“as to those recluses... who are not tied to these five cords of sensual pleasure, who are not infatuated with them or utterly committed to them, and who use them seeing the danger in them and understanding the escape from them, it may be understood of them: ‘They have not met with calamity, not met with disaster, the Evil One cannot do with them as he likes.’”

▲ To Guide and Train his Disciples the Buddha Used Four Methods

In the following sutta the Blessed One describes the way he trains and guides his disciples:

“...I discipline one kind of person gently, another kind sternly, and still another kind both gently and sternly... (1) **the gentle method**: ‘Such is bodily good conduct, such the result of bodily good conduct; such is verbal good conduct, such the result of verbal good conduct; such is mental good conduct, such the result of mental good conduct; such are the devas, such are human beings.’ (2) **the stern method**: ‘Such is bodily misconduct, such the result of bodily misconduct; such is verbal misconduct, such the result of verbal misconduct; such is mental misconduct, such the result of mental misconduct; such is hell, such the animal realm, such the sphere of afflicted spirits... (3) **the gentle and stern method**: ‘Such is bodily good conduct, such the result of bodily good conduct; such is bodily misconduct, such the result of bodily misconduct. Such is verbal good conduct, such the result of verbal good conduct; such is verbal misconduct, such the result of verbal misconduct. Such is mental good conduct, such the result of mental good conduct; such is mental misconduct, such the result of mental misconduct. Such are the devas, such are human beings; such is hell, such the animal realm, such the sphere of afflicted spirits... (4) “If a person to be tamed by me won’t submit to discipline by any of these methods, **then I kill him.**”

Then Kesi, the horse trainer to whom the discourse was given asked:

“But, Bhante, it isn’t allowable for the Blessed One to destroy life. Yet he says, ‘Then I kill him.’”

The Buddha **said**: “It is true, Kesi, that it isn’t allowable for the Tathāgata to destroy life. However, when a person to be tamed won’t submit to discipline by the gentle method, the stern method, or the method that is both gentle and stern, then the Tathāgata thinks he should not be spoken to and instructed, and his wise fellow monks, too, think he should not be spoken to and instructed. For this, Kesi, is **‘killing’ in the Noble One’s discipline**: the Tathāgata thinks one should not be spoken to and instructed, and one’s wise fellow monks, too, think one should not be spoken to and instructed.”^{xi}

▲ Qualities to be Developed by the Sangha to be Worthy

Time and again the Blessed One instructed his disciples to develop good qualities worthy of the Sangha. In the following suttas we can see how the Buddha admonished his monastics.

◆ How to be Worthy- by Having Four Qualities

The Buddha said:

“...bhikkhus, possessing four qualities a bhikkhu is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, an unsurpassed field of merit for the world. What four? Rectitude, speed, patience, and mildness. Possessing these four factors, a bhikkhu is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, an unsurpassed field of merit for the world”^{xii}

* In the following sutta the Buddha says to his disciples how to develop some other 4 qualities:

“Here, a bhikkhu is one who listens, who destroys, who patiently endures, and who goes...how a bhikkhu **listen**: when the Dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata is being taught, a bhikkhu heeds it, attends to it, directs his whole mind to and listens with eager ears... how a bhikkhu **destroys**: does not tolerate an arisen sensual thought... arisen

thought of ill will ... an arisen thought of harming ... any other bad unwholesome states that arise from time to time, but abandons them, dispels them, terminates them, and obliterates them... how a bhikkhu **endure**: patiently endures cold and heat; hunger and thirst; contact with flies, mosquitoes, wind, the burning sun, and serpents; rude and offensive ways of speech; he is able to bear up with arisen bodily feelings that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable, sapping one's vitality... how a bhikkhu **is one who goes**: quickly goes to that region where he has never before gone in this long stretch of time, that is, to the stilling of all activities, the relinquishment of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nibbana...^{xiii}

▲ How to be Skilful in Actions

The Blessed One often advised his disciples to be skilful in their actions.

♦ **In the 'Metta sutta'** (*Karaniya metta sutta*) the Buddha described qualities to be developed by one who is skilled in goodness and who wanted to walk the Path of Peace and achieve freedom. A summary of the qualities to be skilful is given below:

1) **Able**- *sakko* (capable in carrying out tasks relevant to the spiritual life) 2) **Upright**- *ujūca* (not wavering on following precepts with proper conduct) 3) **Straight** - *suhujūca* (to be frank and honest) 4) **Obedient** -*Sūvaco* (accepting and accommodating) 5) **Gentle** -*mudu* (soft in ways) 6) **Humble**- *anatimānī* (modest not conceited) 7) **Contentment**- *santussako* (satisfied with whatever they receive as the four requisites) 8) **Easily satisfied**- *subhara ca* (easy to support, not burdensome to others) 9) **Not busy**- *appakicco* (having few duties, unbusy, unburdened by too many duties) 10) **Frugal**- *sallahukavuttī* (thrifty living simply) 11) **Controlled senses**- *restrain*- *santindriyo* (not letting one's senses go all around) 12) **Wise and skilful** -*nipako* (have wisdom to understand Dhamma and be prudent) 13) **Not proud**- *appagabbho* (modest and not harsh) 14) **Not demanding and attached to families** - *kulesu ananugiddho* (not much association with lay people) 15) **Not doing unwise-unskilful things that the wise people would reprove**- *na ca khuddaṃ samācare kiñci, Yena viññū pare upavadeyyuṃ*) 16) **Having loving kindness towards all beings** (*sukhino vā khemino hontu, Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittatā*) 17) **Not deceiving, hating, or harming others with anger** - *Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha, -Nātimaññetha katthaci naṃ kañci; -Byārosanā paṭighasaññā, Nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya.* 18) **Spreading loving kindness to all beings** - *mettañca sabba lokasmiṃ*, 19) **Having Right view**- *diṭṭhiñca anupagamma, Sīlavā dassanena sampanno.*^{xiv}

♦ Harmful Actions should be Avoided and Beneficial Actions should be Carried Out

Over and over again the Blessed One advised the Sangha to be mindful and reflect on any action before it is done, while it is being done and after it is completed. The following suttas illustrate this matter

♦ Four Deeds to be Reflected upon Carefully

“...there are these 4 deeds: 1) **disagreeable and harmful**: one considers that this deed should not be done on both grounds: because it is disagreeable to do and because it will prove harmful. One considers that this deed should not be done on both grounds. 2) **disagreeable to do but proves beneficial**: one can understand who is a fool and who is a wise person in regard to manly strength, manly energy, and manly exertion. The fool does not reflect thus:

*‘Although this deed is disagreeable to do, still it will prove beneficial... so he does not do that deed, and his refraining from it proves harmful. But the wise person does reflect thus: ‘Although this deed is disagreeable to do, still it will prove beneficial.’ 3) **agreeable to do which will prove harmful**: that one can understand who is a fool and who is a wise person in regard to manly strength, manly energy, and manly exertion. The fool does not reflect thus: ‘Although this deed is agreeable to do, still it will prove harmful.’ so he does that deed, and it proves harmful. But the wise person does reflect thus: ‘Although this deed is agreeable to do, still it will prove harmful.’ So he does not do that deed, and his refraining from it proves beneficial... 4) **agreeable to do which will prove beneficial**: this deed is considered one that should be done on both grounds: because it is agreeable to do and because it proves beneficial. This deed is considered one that should be done on both grounds’^{xv}*

♦ Guarding Three Doors Prevents Unskilful Actions

In MN: 61 (Ambalatthikārāhulovāda Sutta) the Buddha admonished Venerable Rāhula thus:

“... an action with the body... speech ... mind should be done after repeated reflection... ‘Would this action that I wish to do with the body lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both? is it an unwholesome...action with painful consequences, with painful results?’ When you reflect, if you know: ‘This action that I wish to do... would lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it is an unwholesome ... action with painful consequences, with painful results,’ then you definitely should not do such an action with ...but when you reflect, if you know: ‘This action that I wish to do...would not lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both; it is a wholesome...action with pleasant consequences, with pleasant results,’ then you may do such an action...”

♦When Doing Deeds, one should Practice Heedfulness

The Blessed One said thus:

“Bhikkhus, there are four occasions when heedfulness should be practiced... (1) “abandon bodily misconduct and develop bodily good conduct; do not be heedless in this. (2) Abandon verbal misconduct and develop verbal good conduct; do not be heedless in this. (3) Abandon mental misconduct and develop mental good conduct; do not be heedless in this. (4) Abandon wrong view and develop right view; do not be heedless in this...when a bhikkhu has abandoned... misconduct and developed... good conduct; has abandoned wrong view and developed right view, then he need not fear death in the future.”^{xvi}

Restraint is Good

Good is restraint in the eye; good is restraint in the ear;
good is restraint in the nose; good is restraint in the tongue.

Good is restraint in deed; good is restraint in speech;
good is restraint in mind; good is restraint in everything.

The monk, restrained at all points, is freed from sorrow.

Dpa:361.

▲ How Guard the Spiritual Life

As a skilful teacher the Blessed One often shows the Sangha how to sidestep things that would obstruct spiritual development. Often, we see in scriptures how the Sangha gets into dangers while not paying attention to the teaching and training:

♦The Four Perils that would Lead to Abandoning the training

The Buddha advised the Sangha that there are **four dangers** for one who enters the homeless life under his Dispensation. Those who can overcome these four fears will become established in the Dispensation. The others will not become established.

The following suttas give details of the four dangers to be faced in spiritual development:

Here, the spiritual life is compared to entering a body of water—there are four kinds of fears to be expected for one who goes down to the water: **fear of waves, fear of crocodiles, fear of whirlpools, and fear of sharks**. Likewise, there are four dangers to be expected to a person who have gone forth: 1) Not pleased with the instructions on training... it is like a strong wave comes and takes one in to the deep sea 2) Not pleased with the food ...it is like a crocodile comes and drags one and eats him 3) Not restraining the sense faculties...it is like being caught by the whirlpool and drowned 4) Getting involved or attracted to the opposite sex...it is like a shark comes and devours one.

“These, bhikkhus, are the four perils to be expected for a clansman who has gone forth out of faith from the household life into homelessness in this Dhamma and discipline”^{xvii}

That monk who dwells in the Dhamma,
who delights in the Dhamma,
who meditates on the Dhamma,
who well remembers the Dhamma,
does not fall away from the sublime Dhamma.
Dhp:364.

▲ How to Grow in the Dhamma and Discipline

The Buddha pointed out **eleven ways** to be capable of growth in the spiritual life. An extract summary from the suttas is given below:

*“...bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu possesses **these eleven qualities**, he is capable of growth, increase, and fulfilment in this Dhamma and Discipline”*

1) possesses a full knowledge of the material form 2) understands the difference between a wise person and a fool 3) is able to remove all unwholesome actions arising due to sensual desires, ill will and cruelty 4) restrains the six faculties in order not to be tempted by them 5) teaches the Dhamma to others in order to master them 6) visits learned sangha who are well versed in the Dhamma to clarify questions and doubts 7) gains inspiration by hearing the Dhamma 8) understands and practices the Noble Eightfold Path 9) understands and practices the Four Foundations of Mindfulness 10) restrains oneself in receiving the four requisites 11) pays respect and homage to leaders and elder sangha of longstanding in the dispensation.^{xviii}

* In this sutta the Blessed One points out factors that would support the growth of the spiritual path:

“It is possible, Ānanda, that a bhikkhu endowed with faith...virtue... much learning... easy to correct... has good friends... energy... mindfulness... contentment...few desires...and hold right view will achieve growth, progress, and maturity in this Dhamma and discipline...”^{xix}

▲ To be in a Complete Spiritual Life.

Here the Blessed One advises the Sangha to abandon five factors and to develop five factors in order to consummate the holy life.

*“When sensual desire and ill will,
dullness and drowsiness, restlessness,
and doubt are totally absent in a bhikkhu;
when one like this possesses
the virtue and samadhi
of one beyond training.*

*and [similar] liberation and knowledge;
possessing five factors
and having removed five factors,
he is truly called a consummate one
in this Dhamma and discipline.”^{xx}*

Note: The Five factors to abandon are the five hinderances (sensual desire, ill will, dullness & drowsiness, restlessness & remorse and doubt), to possess five factors of one beyond training (asekha dhamma- qualities of an arahant- the consummate one): virtue, samadhi, wisdom, liberation, knowledge and vision.

▲ Skilful in Understanding One’s own Mind

The Blessed One repeatedly advised the Sangha to be skilful in one’s own mind. The Buddha says:

“Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is not skilled in the ways of others’ minds [should train]: ‘I will be skilled in the ways of my own mind.’ It is in this way that you should train yourselves... and how is a bhikkhu skilled in the ways of his own mind? It is just as if a woman or a man...fond of ornaments—would look at her or his own facial reflection in a clean bright mirror or in a bowl of clear water. If they see any dust or blemish there, they will make an effort to remove it. But if they do not see any dust or blemish there, they will be glad about it; and their wish fulfilled, they will think, ‘How fortunate that I’m clean!’ 2060 examination is very helpful for a bhikkhu [to grow] in wholesome qualities.”^{xxi}

Note: To be an expert of one’s own mind there are ten things to be reflect on: **whether I have**

1) desire or not 2) ill will or not 3) dullness and laziness or not 4) restlessness and remorse or not 5) doubt or not 6) anger or not 7) defilements or not 8) bodily agitation or not 9) laziness or energy 10) samadhi or not.

▲ Protectors of the Spiritual Path

Time and again the Blessed One instructed the Sangha to continue one's spiritual life under a protector. In the following suttas the Buddha expounded ten things that would protect the spiritual path:

“Bhikkhus, live under a protector, not without a protector. One without a protector lives in suffering. There are these ten qualities that serve as a protector... (nāthakaraṇā dhammā.)”

The 10 protectors:

1) to dwell in good conduct and resort, seeing danger in minute faults 2) to learn much and retain what has been learned 3) associate with good dhamma friends 4) to be easy to correct and obey teaching instructions with respect 5) skilful in spiritual life and supporting the fellow monastics in diverse duties 6) to love the Dhamma and enjoy it 7) to have energy to abandon the unwholesome and to arouse wholesome qualities 8) to have contentment in material things 9) to have sound mindfulness 10) to have wisdom to understand arising and passing away which leads to the destruction of suffering ^{xxii}.

▲ Engage in Subjects Suitable for Discussion

The Blessed One regularly admonished the Sangha to refrain from idle talk, empty talk and chatter and to engage in noble silence. He advised the Sangha thus:

“...It is fitting for you clansmen who have gone forth out of faith from the home life into homelessness to sit together to discuss the Dhamma. When you gather together, bhikkhus, you should do either of two things: hold discussion on the Dhamma or maintain noble silence”. ^{xxiii}

* In the following sutta the Blessed One advised the Sangha not to talk of pointless matters such as: talk about kings, robbers, states countries etc. but if they wanted to have a conversation, they should talk about the following matters:

“Bhikkhus, it is not suitable for you, ...who have gone forth from the household life into homelessness out of faith, to engage in various kinds of pointless talk... there are, bhikkhus, these ten topics of discussion. What ten? Talk on fewness of desires, on contentment, on solitude, on not being bound up with others, on arousing energy, on virtuous behavior, on concentration, on wisdom, on liberation, on knowledge and vision of liberation...” ^{xxiv}

Note: The Buddha also advised the Sangha to speak to others in holy life and encourage them to talk about the ten subjects mentioned above.

▲ Things to be Abandoned

Often in the scriptures we see the Buddha saying to his disciples that a Perfectly Enlightened Buddha appears in the world because there are three things: birth, old age and death existing in the world. In the following sutta he shows the Sangha how to abandon these three things that bring suffering. A summary of his advice is given below:

1) to abandon birth, old age and death, one must overcome greed, hate and delusion.
2) to abandon greed, hatred and delusion, one must overcome personal-existence view, doubt, and wrong grasp of behaviour and observances.

- 3) to abandon personal-existence view, doubt, and wrong grasp of behavior and observances, one must overcome careless attention, following a wrong path, and mental sluggishness.
- 4) to abandon careless attention, following a wrong path, and mental sluggishness, one must overcome muddle-mindedness, lack of clear comprehension, and mental distraction.
- 5) to abandon muddle-mindedness, lack of clear comprehension, and mental distraction, one must overcome a lack of desire to see the noble ones and to hear the noble Dhamma, and a mind bent on criticism.
- 6) to abandon a lack of desire to see the noble ones and to hear the noble Dhamma, and a mind bent on criticism, one must overcome restlessness, non-restraint, and immorality.
- 7) to abandon restlessness, non-restraint, and immorality, one must overcome a lack of faith, uncharitableness, and laziness.
- 8) to abandon a lack of faith, uncharitableness, and laziness, one must overcome disrespect, being difficult to correct, and bad friendship.
- 9) to abandon disrespect, being difficult to correct, and bad friendship, one must overcome moral shamelessness, moral recklessness, and heedlessness.^{xxv}

▲ Reflections of One who has Gone Forth

Often, we see in the scriptures the Blessed One emphasising the importance of knowing what is unwholesome and how to develop wholesome qualities for the enhancement of one's spiritual life.

The Buddha said that when a monk or nun reflects daily on the following matters, they will be able to abandon conceit and other unwholesome things:

- 1) I have entered upon a classless condition (as a monk or nun they have up the status they previously had in lay life, such as caste, rich or poor, educated or not etc.)
- 2) My living is dependent upon others (since monastics are not allowed to use money, they have to depend on the support of the lay people)
- 3) My behaviour should be different (not to act like lay people but act with mindfulness and restrain)
- 4) Do I blame myself in regard to virtuous behaviour? (investigation of keeping precepts etc.)
- 5) Do my wise fellow monks, having investigated, reproach me in regard to virtuous behaviour?
- 6) I must be parted and separated from everyone and everything dear and agreeable to me (to see the impermanency of life)
- 7) Reflect on one's actions: I am the owner of my kamma, the heir of my kamma; I have kamma as my origin, kamma as my relative, kamma as my resort; I will be the heir of whatever kamma, good or bad, that I do (it would help to do only wholesome actions)
- 8) How am I spending my nights and days? (to act in heedfulness).
- 9) Do I take delight in empty huts? (to be in seclusion)
- 10) Have I attained any superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones, so that in my last days, when I am questioned by my fellow monks, I will not be embarrassed? (to encourage them to attain noble status and freedom from suffering)^{xxvi}

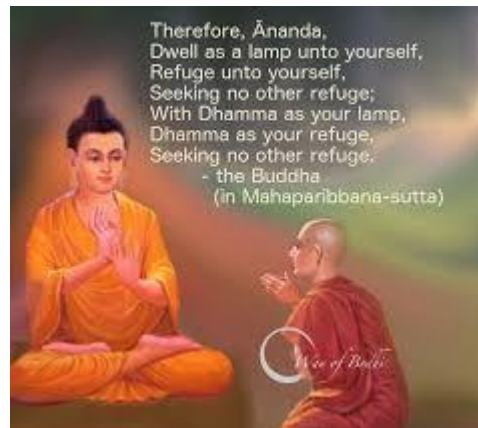
▲ More Reflections for the Sangha

The Buddha often pointed out subjects that should be reflected on by the Sangha. Here we can see some of the reflections recommended by the Blessed One.

♦ To be an Island to oneself

The Buddha advised thus:

“Ananda, you should live as islands unto yourselves, being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge. And how does a monk live as an island unto himself ... with no other refuge? Here, Ānanda, a monk abides contemplating the body as body, earnestly, clearly aware, mindful and having put away all hankering and fretting for the world, and likewise with regard to feelings, mind and mind-objects ... and those who now in my time or afterwards live thus, they will become the highest, if they are desirous of learning.”^{xxvii}



Buddha advising Venerable Ānanda : Picture courtesy:

<https://www.wayofbodhi.org/attadipa-sutta-dwelling-as-a-lamp-unto-onesel>

▲ Respect Teachers, Elders and Other Members of the Sangha

For the spiritual growth of the Sangha the Blessed One often advised them to be respectful and honour others worthy of respect. In this category the Buddha insisted that being respectful and obedient to the Teacher is vital. To respect and honour elders in Dhamma too is important as they would often give them correct advice and show them the right way to enhance their spiritual life. The Buddha also insisted that the Sangha should respect the fellow monks or nuns for the sake of harmony and as an example for lay people. Such conduct brings benefits as outlined in the following extract:

“...when a bhikkhu is reverential and deferential, and his behaviour is congenial to his fellow monks, it is possible for him to fulfill the duty of proper conduct. Having fulfilled the duty of proper conduct, it is possible for him to fulfill the duty of a trainee. Having fulfilled the duty of a trainee, it is possible for him to fulfill virtuous behaviour. (4) Having fulfilled virtuous behaviour, it is possible for him to fulfill right view. (5) Having fulfilled right view, it is possible for him to fulfill right samadhi...”^{xxviii}

▲ Reflection on Ten Perceptions.

In this sutta the Blessed One recommended the following ten reflections:

1) Impermanency- to see the instability of the world 2) Nonself – one is not able to control 3) Unattractiveness of the body 4) Danger to the body through various illnesses and elements 5) Abandoning unwholesome thoughts 6) Dispassion towards the world and reflection on peace-nibbāna 7) Reflection on cessation of all acquisitions and the peacefulness of liberation 8)

non-delight in the world 9) Impermanence of all conditioned things 10) Mindfulness of breathing.^{xxix}

▲ The Final Advice of the Buddha

Then the Lord said to the monks:

‘Now, monks, I declare to you: all conditioned things are of a nature to decay — strive on untiringly.’^{xxx}

End Notes: Section 11

ⁱ AN2: 5.

ⁱⁱ SN56: 11 (Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta)

ⁱⁱⁱ MN: 19 (Dvedhāvitakka Sutta)

^{iv} MN:10. * The Pali reads *ekāyano ayaṃ bhikkhave maggo*, and virtually all translators understand this as a statement upholding satipaṭṭhāna as an exclusive path. Thus Ven. Soma renders it: “This is the only way, O bhikkhus,” and Ven. Nyanaponika: “This is the sole way, monks.” Ñm, however, points out that *ekāyana magga* at MN 12.37–42 has the unambiguous contextual meaning of “a path that goes in one way only,” and so he rendered the phrase in this passage, too. The expression used here, “the direct path,” is an attempt to preserve this meaning in a more streamlined phrasing. **See:** MN: Notes: 135, p. 1076.

^v MN: 26 (Ariyapariyesanā Sutta)

^{vi} AN5:27.

^{vii} :AN8: 53.

^{viii} AN7: 83.

^{ix} MN: 13 (Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta).

^x Ibid.

^{xi} See: AN4: 111 (1Kesi sutta)

^{xix} AN4: 112.

^{xiii} SAN4: 114.

^{xiv} Mettā Sutta is a discourse that gives guidelines for the development of spirituality and the importance of spreading loving kindness to all beings. See: Snp:1.8 & KN: Khuddakapatha: 9.

^{xv} AN4: 115

^{xvi} AN4: 116. *This refers to arahants... they do not fear death either in the future or in this present life, see: AN: Note: 797, p. 621.

^{xvii} AN4: 122. * In MN:67 (Cātumā Sutta) also described the 4 dangers in the same way.

^{xviii} MN: 33: (Mahāgopālaka Sutta) & AN11: 17.

^{xix} AN10: 82 (2 Ānanda sutta).

^{xx} AN10: 12.

^{xxi} AN10: 51 (One’s own mind sutta)

^{xxii} AN10: 17. * Under the Protector II chapter of AN10, there are a few suttas giving some other factors which protect one’s spiritual life. See: AN10: Protector II.

^{xxiii} MN:26 (Ariyapariyesanā Sutta)

^{xxiv} AN10: 69 & 70

^{xxv} AN10: 76.

^{xxvi} **See:**AN10: 48.

^{xxvii} DN:16 (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta)

^{xxviii} AN5: 21.

^{xxix} AN10: 60 (Girimananda sutta)

