**Section 7**

This section we will focus on how great was the Buddha in his teaching, his skillful ways as a teacher, rising to each occasion and convincing the truth to the beings who had doubts and perplexity. After his enlightenment his most important task was to teach people his Dhamma in order to free them from suffering.  Buddha promoted the correct understanding of human nature and helped people to see their own mind through peaceful meditative attainments.



The Buddha the Universal Compassionate One. Picture courtesy: https://newbuddhist.com/

Through the scriptures, we can see, how the Blessed One as a great teacher –‘ Spiritual Guru’ was successful in convincing the mass, the truth of the Dhamma hard to see!

“ …If you study the Buddha’s teachings, you may find that some of them are in harmony with your views on societal values, science and consumerism—and some of them are not. That is fine. Continue to investigate and reflect on what you discover. In this way, whatever conclusion you reach will be based on reason, not simply on tradition, peer pressure or blind faith…”

**Dalai Lama [[1]](#endnote-1)**

**Role of the Buddha as the Teacher**

At the outset of this section, we would like to bring the following statement of Bhikhu Bodhi summing up the greatness of the Blessed One as a universal teacher.

“ …in the Majjhima (Nikaya) we do not meet the Buddha only in his role as head of the Order. Repeatedly we see him engaged in living dialogue with people from the many different strata of ancient Indian society—with kings and princes, with brahmins and ascetics, with simple villagers and erudite philosophers, with earnest seekers and vain disputants. It is perhaps in this scripture above all others that the Buddha emerges in the role ascribed to him in the canonical verse of homage to the Blessed One as “***the*** *incomparable leader of persons to be tamed, the teacher of gods and humans*”.[[2]](#endnote-2)

**Bhikkhu Bodhi.**

The most amazing things about the Buddha as a role of a teacher of Dhamma was his boundless compassion, great humility and brilliant teaching methods. With those excellent tools combined with his vast wisdom and psychic ability the Blessed One was able to guide and win-over innumerable humans as well as devas who approached him seeking solace and peace. In the scriptures there are many evidence that even the members of the other religious sectors, though they were not inclined to follow his teaching, have respected him and even paid tribute to him.

We have selected a few extracts from the scriptures to endorsed the above statement.

♦ **The Buddha and the Brahmin Sundarika Bhāradvāja:**

On one occasion the Blessed One, with the simile of the cloth explained to the assembly of monks and lay people, how the mind could become impure or pure; wrapping up the discourse he said: when a person with pure mind understands the Dhamma, he has the capability to liberate his mind and he can be called ‘***one bathed with the inner bathing’.*** Sitting in that assembly was brahmin Sundarika Bhāradvāja who believed in purification by ritual bathing. When the Buddha mentioned of ‘inner bathing’, he got excited and asked: “…*does Master Gotama go to the Bāhukā River to bathe?”*

When the Buddha asked the reason for taking a bath in the Bāhukā River, he said:

*“Master Gotama, the Bāhukā River is held by many to give liberation, it is held by many to give merit, and many wash away their evil actions in the Bāhukā River.”*

Then the Blessed One said thus:

“*Bāhukā and Adhikakkā, Gaya…*

*and the stream Bahumatī,*

*A fool may there forever bathe,*

*Yet will not purify dark deeds.*

*One pure in heart has evermore*

*…one fair in act, one pure in heart*

*Brings his virtue to perfection.*

*It is here, brahmin, that you should bathe,*

*To make yourself a refuge for all beings.*

*… With faith and free from avarice,*

*What need for you to go to Gayā?*

*For any well will be your Gayā.”*

Then Brahmin Sundarika Bhāradvāja understood the well-spoken and logical teaching of the Blessed One, and uttered:

*“Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! Master Gotama has made the Dhamma clear in many ways, as though he were turning upright what had been overthrown, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see forms. I go to Master Gotama for refuge…”*

He became a noble arahant of the Buddha’s dispensation [[3]](#endnote-3).

♦ **The Buddha and the wanderer Māgandiya:**

In MN: Māgandiya Sutta we can see the wanderer Māgandiya who was hedonist philosopher, not approving the Buddha, even disgusted to see the bed where the Blessed One slept, said this to his friend who was accommodating the Blessed One at his abode: [[4]](#endnote-4)

*“The recluse Gotama is a destroyer of growth.’ Why is that? Because that has come down in our discourse.”*

Then meeting wanderer Māgandiya, the Blessed One gave an opportunity to Māgandiya to explains his views and ideas. Then the Buddha, using clear parables and sound reasonings, broke Magandiya's views and vision of sensual world, allowed him to understand his own doctrine. The one of the lucid similes the Buddha gave which aided Māgandiya to see the things as they are was:

*“Māgandiya, suppose there was a man born blind who could not see … He might hear a man with good eyesight saying: ‘****Good indeed, sirs, is a white cloth, beautiful, spotless, and clean!****’ and he would go in search of a white cloth. Then a man would cheat him with a dirty soiled garment … -and he would accept it and put it on, and being satisfied with it, he would utter words of satisfaction thus: ‘Good indeed, sirs, is a white cloth, beautiful, spotless, and clean!’ What do you think, Māgandiya? When that man born blind accepted that dirty soiled garment, put it on, and being satisfied with it …—did he do so know and seeing, or out of faith in the man with good eyesight?”*

Māgandiya said: *“Venerable sir, he would have done so unknowing and unseeing, out of faith in the man with good eyesight.”*

The Buddha said: ‘so *too, Māgandiya, the wanderers of other sects are blind and visionless. They do not know health, they do not see Nibbāna, yet they utter this stanza thus: ‘****The greatest of all gains is health, Nibbāna is the greatest bliss.****’*

After listening to the discourse of the Buddha, establishing faith on him, Magandia said :

*“I have confidence in Master Gotama thus: ‘Master Gotama is capable of teaching*

*me the Dhamma in such a way that I can come to know health and to see Nibbāna.”*

So, we can see how the Buddha using illustrious similes and firm reasonings gave a wonderful teaching to Magandia, who became one of his faithful disciples and noble arahant.

♦ **The Buddha and Prince Abhaya**

The following event occurred at Prince Abhaya’s home, we can see how the Buddha revealed his apt wisdom and compassion for all beings.

One time Prince Abhaya, one of the sons of King Bimbisara of Magadha [[5]](#endnote-5), who was a follower of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta [[6]](#endnote-6) was asked by his teacher to meet the Buddha and refute his doctrine. The methods he suggested was to asked the Buddha whether he speaks words disagreeable to others, if the Buddha agreed, then to ask what the difference between him and ordinary people? If the Buddha replied: that he would not utter speech that would disagreeable to others, then say to him: …why have you declared that Devadatta is destined for a rebirth in lower realm? …he is angry and displease of your speech. Further he said to Prince Abhaya, when the recluse Gotama is posed this two-horned question by you, he will not be able either to throw it up or to gulp it down. (Suggesting that the prince could refute the Buddha that way!). Following the advice of his teacher, Prince Abhaya invited the Blessed One to his home for a meal. After the meal he asked thus:

*“Venerable sir, would a Tathāgata utter such speech as would be unwelcome and disagreeable to others?”*

The Buddha replied: *“There is no one-sided answer to that, prince”.*

The prince said: “*Then, venerable sir, the Nigaṇṭhas have lost in this”* [[7]](#endnote-7)

Then prince told the Buddha about his conversation with his teacher. Then the Buddha asked:

*“ …what do you think prince, this child (pointing to the son of the prince) were to put a pebble in his mouth, what would you do to him?”*

The prince replied: “*Venerable sir, I would take it out. If I could not take it out at once, I would take his head in my left hand, and crooking a finger of my right hand, I would take it out even if it meant drawing blood. Why is that? Because I have compassion for the child.”*

Then The Blessed One explained: 1) that such speech…to be untrue…unbeneficial, and which is also …disagreeable to others: such speech the Tathāgata does not utter…2) speech knows to be true and correct but unbeneficial, …and disagreeable to others: such speech the Tathāgata does not utter…3) …speech knows to be true, and beneficial, but which is disagreeable to others: the Tathāgata knows the time to use such speech 4) …speech…knows to be untrue, and unbeneficial, but which is welcome and agreeable to others: such speech the Tathāgata does not utter 5) … speech…knows to be true but unbeneficial, and which is agreeable to others: such speech the Tathāgata does not utter 6) …speech as knows to be true and beneficial, and which is …agreeable to others: the Tathāgata knows the time to use such speech. Why is that? Because the Tathāgata has compassion for beings.”

Then Prince Abhaya asked a further question:

*“Venerable sir, when learned nobles…and learned recluses, after formulating a question, then go to the Blessed One and pose it, has there already been in the Blessed One’s mind the thought: ‘If they come to me and ask me thus, I shall answer thus? Or does that answer occur to the Tathāgata on the spot?”*

Knowing that prince was skilled in chariots, the Buddha asked:

*“What do you think, prince? When people come to you and ask: ‘What is the name of this part of the chariot?’ has there already been in your mind the thought: ‘If they come to me and ask me thus, I shall answer them thus’? Or does that answer occur to you on the spot?*”

He replied: *“Venerable sir, I am well known as a charioteer skilled in the parts of a chariot. All the parts of a chariot are well known to me. That answer would occur to me on the spot.”*

The Buddha elaborated:

*“So too, prince, when learned nobles… learned recluses, after formulating a question, then come to the Tathāgata and pose it, the answer occurs to the Tathāgata on the spot. Why is that? That element of things has been fully penetrated by the Tathāgata, through the full penetration of which the answer occurs to the Tathāgata on the spot.”*

After this episode, Prince Abahya became an ardent follower of the Buddha and at a later date became a disciple and a noble arahant.

**See**: MN: Abhayarājakumāra Sutta

**♦ The Buddha and the wanderer Vacchagotta**

During the Buddhas time, other religious sectors speculated on 10 views and always debated and argued about them [[8]](#endnote-8). One time the wanderer Vacchagotta approached the Blessed One asked: *“…does Master Gotama hold any speculative view at all?”*

The Buddha said:

“*Vaccha, ‘speculative view’ is something that the Tathāgata has put away. For the Tathāgata, … has seen this: ‘Such is material form… feeling… perception… formations … consciousness, such their origin, such their disappearance…therefore, I say, with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of all conceiving’s, all excogitations, all I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit, the Tathāgata is liberated through not clinging”*

Then Vaccha asked:

“*When a bhikkhu’s mind is liberated thus, Master Gotama, where does he reappear [after death]?”*

The dialogue followed like this:

*“The term ‘reappears’ does not apply, Vaccha.”*

*“Then he does not reappear, Master Gotama?”*

*“The term ‘does not reappear’ does not apply, Vaccha.”*

*“Then he both reappears and does not reappear, Master Gotama?”*

*“The term ‘both reappears and does not reappear’ does not apply, Vaccha.” “Then he neither reappears nor does not reappear, Master Gotama?”*

*“The term ‘neither reappears nor does not reappear’ does not apply, Vaccha.*

Then Vaccha said that:

*“…Master Gotama, here I have fallen into confusion, and the measure of confidence I had gained through previous conversation with Master Gotama has now disappeared”.*

Then the Blessed One through the beautiful simile of the fire explained how the view of self-disappeared through the liberation-- when there is a fire burning before the presence of a person, he knows there is a fire; that fire is burning depend on sticks, then the fire has been extinguished because there were no sticks to burn; then someone asked that person what happened to the fire? when it ended up, what direction it went…north or south…etc. Then the Buddha asked*:*

*“Vaccha, if someone asked that question from you what would you say?*

He replied:

*“That does not apply, Master Gotama. The fire burned in dependence on its fuel of grass and sticks. When that is used up, if it does not get any more fuel, being without fuel, it is reckoned as extinguished.”*

So, through the simile of the extinguished fire, the Blessed One convinced Vaccha and he became follower of the Buddha and at a later date became an arahant disciple and praised the Buddha thus:

*‘…the Blessed One has been worshipped by me, the Sublime One has been worshipped by me…”*

**See:** MN: Aggivacchagotta Sutta & Mahāvacchagotta Sutta.

♦ **The Buddha and his disciples:**

The following incident shows, how the disciple regarded the Buddha as the great teacher who found the spiritual path.

On one occasion at the Pavāraṇā ceremony [[9]](#endnote-9), the Blessed One invited his disciples to point out any misconduct on his part; then Venerable Sāriputta after paying homage to the Buddha said thus:

*“Venerable sir, there is no deed of the Blessed One, either bodily or verbal, that we censure…the Blessed One is the originator of the path un-arisen before, the producer of the path unproduced before, the declarer of the path undeclared before. He is the knower of the path, the discoverer of the path, the one skilled in the path. And his disciples now dwell following that path and become possessed of it afterwards”*

See: SN:1: 8 Vañgisasamyutta:7 Pavāraṇā sutta, p.403.

“The Buddha is the ‘teacher of devas and humans’ (satthā devamanussānaṃ), and though squarely established in the human world he (the Buddha) towers above the most exalted deities by reason of his supreme wisdom and perfect purity…the devas usually come to visit the Buddha in the deep stillness of the night, while the rest of the world lies immersed in sleep…sometimes the devas come to recite verses in praise of the Master, sometimes to ask questions… on approaching they almost always bow down to him in homage, for the Buddha is their spiritual and moral superior” . [[10]](#endnote-10)

\* The Buddha was accepted by other non-human beings, such as Devas’ [[11]](#endnote-11) Brahmas’ [[12]](#endnote-12)and Yakas’ [[13]](#endnote-13) as wise and great teacher who have inspired them with his purity and universal knowledge. Following are a few selected extracts from the scriptures of the encounters the Blessed One had with devas, brahmas and yakkas.

♦ **The Buddha and the Sakka, ruler of the gods:**

One time the Sakka, ruler of the gods, approached the Blessed One paid homage and asked why beings wish to live in peace and harmony yet live in hate, harming one another. The Buddha’s reply was due: to jealousy and greed, beings hate and haram one another. Then Sakka asked subsequent questions related to his primary question. The summery of the Buddha’s replies were:

- **jealousy and greed** for other beings come to be due to **like and dislike** of things; like and dislike arise because of **craving** for things, in turn they come to be due to **thinking-**(being preoccupied about their craving); due to thinking, tendency to **proliferation** come to be…when absent of **jealousy and greed** there is no **like and dislike** in the mind; absence of that, **craving** does not arises; when there is no carving there is no **thinking**;

When thinking is absent there is no **proliferation.** When one follows the right way -according to Dhamma-then all proliferations are cessed; then the Buddha elaborated to the Sakka, ruler of the god the right way leading to cessation of all proliferation-

*“And while he had been speaking in this dialogue, the pure and spotless Dhamma-Eye arose within Sakka, ruler of the gods, and he knew: ‘Whatever things have an origin must come to cessation” (*He became a Stream-Winner).

Then Sakka was delighted of the Buddha’s teaching and said:

*“I’ve seen the Buddha, and my doubts Are all dispelled, my fears are allayed, and now to the Enlightened One I pay Homage due, to him who’s drawn the dart of craving, to the Buddha, peerless Lord, Mighty hero, kinsman of the Sun! Just as Brahmā’s worshipped by the gods, so likewise today we worship you, Enlightened One, and Teacher unsurpassed, whom none can equal in the human world, or in the heavens, dwelling of the gods!”*

**See**:DN: Sakkapañha Sutta.



The Sakka the ruler of the devas’ listening to the discourse of the Buddha. Picture courtesy: https://wisdomquarterly.blogspot.com/

♦ **The Buddha and Yakka Āḷavaka**

Taming the Yakka Āḷavaka: the scriptures shows, how the Buddha with his unique patience and strategies as a great teacher, subdued a fierce yakka. The background story to this episode is given below:

“One day King Āḷavaka of Āḷavı̄, while on a hunt, was captured by the ferocious yakkha Āḷavaka, who threatened to eat him. The king could obtain release only by promising the demon that he would provide him daily with a human victim. First the king sent the criminals from the prison, but when there were no more prisoners, he required every family to provide a child. All the families with children eventually fled to other lands and it became incumbent on the king to offer his own son, the Āḷavaka prince [[14]](#endnote-14). The Buddha, aware of the impending sacrifice, went to the yakkha’s haunt on the day before the offering was to take place in order to convert the demon from his evil ways. At that time the yakkha was attending a meeting in the Himalayas, but the Buddha entered his cave, sat down on the yakkha’s throne, and preached the Dhamma to his harem ladies. When the yakkha heard about this, he hastened back to Āḷavı̄ in a fury and demanded that the Blessed One leave”. See: SN: Notes: 593, p.579.



Taming of Āḷavaka Yakka by the Blessed One: Picture courtesy: https://namo.lk/category/tripitaka/sutta/samyuttanikaya/

According to scriptures the Yakka came to his abode and seeing the Buddha sitting there said: “*Get out, ascetic!*”. The Buddha said: *“All right, friend,”* and he went out, then the yakka said: “*Come in, ascetic*” and the Blessed One came in. The Buddha complied with the yakkha’s demands three times because he knew that compliance was the most effective way to soften his mind. But when the yakkha thought to send the Buddha in and out all night long, the Master refused to obey [[15]](#endnote-15) saying: “*I won’t go out, friend. Do whatever you have to do”.*

Then the yakka threated the Buddha: “*I’ll ask you a question, ascetic. If you won’t answer me, I’ll drive you insane or I’ll split your heart or I’ll grab you by the feet and hurl you across the Ganges”.*

The Blessed One who was unshakable said thus:

*“I do not see anyone in this world, friend, with its devas, Māra, and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans, who could drive me insane or split my heart or grab me by the feet and hurl me across the Ganges. But ask whatever you want, friend*”.

Then Yakka Āḷavaka asked several questions on truthfulness, wisdom, self-control, generosity, dutifulness, patience etc. After listening to the Buddha’s replies, he was satisfied and delighted uttered:

*“Why now should I ask this question of the many ascetics and brahmins? Today I have understood the good pertaining to the future life, indeed, for my sake the Buddha came to reside at Āḷavī. Today I have understood where a gift bears great fruit…I myself will travel about from village to village, town to town, paying homage to the Enlightened One and to the excellence of the Dhamma.”*

**See:** SN: Yakkasamyutta: 12 Āḷavaka sutta.



Tradition says that when the Blessed One taches he used his hands in this posture; called Dhamma Chakka Mudra- which he used, when he was delivering his first sermon at Deer park, Isipathana. Picture courtesy: https://namo.lk/dhammachakkappavattana-sutta/

♦ **The Buddha and Brahmā Baka** [[16]](#endnote-16)

According to scriptures, the Brahama Baka after spending so many eons in Brahama world had a wrong view that his state is superior and eternal. The Blessed One having known with his own mind the reflection in Brahmā Baka’s mind, out of compassion to the brahma Baka, disappeared from Jeta’s Grove and reappeared in that brahmā world [[17]](#endnote-17). The Buddha in his dialogue with brahma Baka elaborated that his life span in this brahma world also going to end and described his previous lives and good deeds he did. At the end of the discourse brahma Baka changed is wrong view about permanency and bow down to the Blessed One thus:

*“Surely you know this life span of mine;*

*The others too you know, thus you’re the Buddha.*

*Thus, this blazing majesty of yours*

*Illumines even the brahmā world”*

**See**: SN: Brahmasamyutta: 4 (4) Brahmā Baka sutta, p.330 [[18]](#endnote-18)

\*The Buddha as a wise teacher always listened to the thing’s others had to say, then, if the saying of the other person is reasonable and truth, he praises the person and accept his sayings. Following, we can see some of the evidence of the scriptures on this matter:

♦ **The Buddha acknowledges Deva Tāyana**

In one occasion a young deva Tāyana approached the Buddha, paid homage to him and recited verses related to the holy life. The Following day the Buddha said to the sangha about his encounter with young deva Tāyana and advised the bhikkhus thus:

*“…learn Tāyana’s verses, bhikkhus…Remember Tāyana’s verses…Tāyana’s verses are beneficial, bhikkhus, they pertain to the fundamentals of the holy life”.*

SN:Devaputtasamyutta: 8 (8) Tāyana sutta, p.175.

♦**The Buddha praises Bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā** [[19]](#endnote-19)

One time, Visākha [[20]](#endnote-20), non-returner and a lay follower of the Buddha approached Venerable Bhikkhuni Dhammadinnāa, paid homage to her and asked deep Dhamma question with regard to Identity View and liberation. She has given articulate response to all the questions and Visākha was impressed, went to see the Buddha and related to him the episode with the bhikkhuni. At the end the Blessed One parsing the bhikkhuni, endorsed her discourse as the word of Buddha and said:

“*The bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā is wise, Visākha, the bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā has great wisdom. If you had asked me the meaning of this, I would have explained it to you in the same way that the bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā has explained it. Such is its meaning, and so you should remember it.”*

**See:** MN:Cūḷavedalla Sutta

\* The main purpose of the Buddha’s teaching Dhamma was to guide all beings free from suffering. He understood the human nature and used appropriate techniques-to help them by guiding people to develop their own minds so they could understand themselves, and act to overcome their suffering and to be peaceful. In the following are a few of events highlighting the skill and compassion of the Buddha, understanding the suffering of other beings and how he helped them to gain peace.



Kisā Gotamī besieging the Buddha to bring her dead son back to life. Picture courtesy: https://www.vridhamma.org/

♦ **The story of Bhikkhuni Kisā Gotamī [[21]](#endnote-21)**

When the Blessed One was living in Sāvatti, Kisā Gotamī lived with her poor family in nearby village but later moved to rich abode of her husband. However, the life with rich relatives were not so comfortable for her as she did not bring a rich dowery to her in-laws and they were not very happy about her. But later when she gave birth toa son, her life became much easier as the tradition at that time was to accept the daughter in law as a worthy one who gave a heir to the family. So, the little baby son was her world. But when the little son died due to sickness, Kisā Gotamī could not accept the reality and was carrying the dead son here and there asking for a good doctor to cure her son. When a kind villager saw the weeping and wailing mother running around, he told her that there is the Buddha, who is a great physician who could cure her son is now living in the nearby monastery called Jetavana.

She ran towards the monastery, saw the Blessed One sitting there, put her son near the feet of the Buddha, crying and asked the Buddha to help her son. The most wise and compassionate Buddha, knowing her mind state asked her to bring a few mustard seeds, collected form a house there were no one died. She was so happy to bring a few mustard seeds from the neighbouring village and ran towards the village.

The family of the first house was happy to give her mustard seeds she collected them and then asked “ *has anyone died in your house*”. They replied: yes, their father died recently in that house; disappointed, Kisā Gotamī went to the next house… then to the next house… hoping to find a house without any one died; but it was not that to be. Everyone who was born had to die… she could not find a single family where no one died. She had the wisdom to realize the universal truth of impermanency of life- She put her dead son at the cremation ground and went back to the Buddha who taught the Pure Dhamma and understanding the universal reality she renounced her lay life, became a bhikkhuni, practiced according to the Dhamma and became a disciple of the Blessed One.

In SN:Bhikkhunisamyutrta we can see Venerable Kisā Gotamī as an arahant, fearlessly faced the Māra the evil one:

One-time Venerable bhikkhuni Kisā Gotamī was meditating in the forest, the Māra approached her and said this:

*“Why now, when your son is dead,*

*Do you sit alone with tearful face?*

*Having entered the woods all alone,*

*Are you on the lookout for a man?*

The bhikkhuni replied:

*“I’ve gotten past the death of sons;*

*With this, the search for men has ended.*

*I do not sorrow, I do not weep,*

*Nor do I fear you, friend!”*

Then Māra the Evil One, realizing, “The bhikkhunī Kisāgotamī knows me,” sad and disappointed, disappeared right there.

**See:** SN:Bhikkhunisamyutta: sutta no 3, p.305.

♦ **The story of Angulimāla [[22]](#endnote-22), the serial killer**

On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvatthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park, there was a serial killer called Angulimāla in the kingdom of King Pasenadi of Kosala. He was collecting 1000 fingers to make a garland for his teacher as an honorarium. At the time the sutta opens he was one short of a thousand and had made a determination to kill the next person to come along. The Buddha saw that Angulimāla’s mother was on her way to visit him, and aware that Angulimāla had the supporting conditions for arahantship, he intercepted him shortly before his mother was due to arrive. Matricide is one of the five terrible crimes that lead to immediate rebirth in hell. Thus, the Buddha with his universal compassion for both the mother and the son, intercedes to prevent Angulimāla from committing this crime. When Angulimāla saw the Blessed One walking along on the forest path; he came running behind the Buddha, thinking to cut a finger to complete his finger garland. Then the Blessed One performed such a feat of supernormal power that the bandit Angulimāla, though running as fast as he could, could not catch up with the Blessed One, who was walking at his normal pace. Then the bandit Angulimāla thought: “It is wonderful, it is marvellous! Formerly I could catch up even with a swift elephant and seize it… though I am running as fast as I can, I cannot catch up with this recluse who is walking at his normal pace!” He stopped and called out to the Blessed One:

*“Stop, recluse! Stop, recluse!”*

The Buddha replied:

*“I have stopped, Angulimāla, you stop too.”*

Then Angulimāla thought: these recluses, sons of the Sakyans, speak truth… but though this recluse is still walking, he says: ‘I have stopped, Angulimāla, you stop too.… suppose I question him and asked the Buddha:

*“While you are walking, recluse, you tell me you have stopped; but now, when I have stopped, you say I have not stopped; I ask you about the meaning: ‘how is it that you have stopped and I have not?’”*

The Buddha said thus:

*“Angulimāla, I have stopped forever, I abstain from violence towards living beings; but you have no restraint towards things that live: that is why I have stopped and you have not.”*

Due to his previous good kammas, Angulimāla had the wisdom to understand the Buddha’s words; he realised that the monk before him was the Buddha himself and that he had come to the forest for the express purpose of transforming him. He threw his sword and weapons and bowed down at the feet of the Sublime One asked going forth.

*The Enlightened One, the Sage of Great Compassion,*

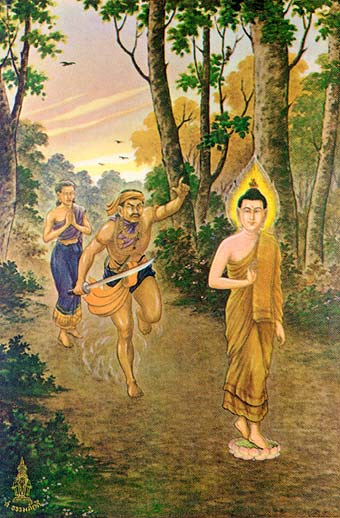
*The Teacher of the world with [all] its gods,*

*Addressed him with these words, “Come, bhikkhu.”*

*And that was how he came to be a bhikkhu.*

Angulimāla became a great disciple and arahant of the Buddha’s dispensation.

See: MN: Angulimāla Sutta.



Angulimala running after the Buddha. Picture Courtesy: https://www.facebook.com/InnerDhamma/photos

“ As a skilled and versatile teacher, the Buddha adopted different styles of presentation to communicate the Dhamma to his disciples. Often, he would explain a teaching in detail (vitthārena). Having introduced his topic with a short statement or synopsis (uddesa), he would then explain it at length (niddesa), analysing it, drawing out its implications, and sometimes attaching a simile (upamā) to reinforce his point. Finally, he would restate the introductory declaration as a conclusion (niggamana), now supported by the entire weight of the foregoing analysis. On other occasions, however, the Buddha would not teach in detail. Instead, he would present the Dhamma briefly (saṅkhittena), offering only a short, sometimes even cryptic, statement charged with a profound but highly concentrated meaning. The Buddha did not teach the Doctrine in this way in order to conceal an esoteric message. He used this technique because it sometimes proved more effective than a detailed elaboration in shaking and transforming the minds of his listeners.

Although direct explanation of the meaning may have transmitted information more efficiently, the purpose of the teaching is not to convey information but to lead on— to insight, higher wisdom, and deliverance. By requiring the disciples to reflect upon the meaning and to draw out the implications by sustained inquiry and mutual discussion, the Buddha ensured that his utterance would serve this purpose…”

**Bhikkhu Bodhi** [[23]](#endnote-23)

“*Sāriputta, I can teach the Dhamma briefly; I can teach the Dhamma in detail; I can teach the Dhamma both briefly and in detail. It is those who can understand that are rare.”*

**See:** AN:3: 33.3 sutta, p. 90.

\* Before preaching the Dhamma to a person or group of people, the Blessed One often ponder whether they would have the capability to understand his teachings. Through his power (*indriya paropariyatte ñāna*) [[24]](#endnote-24) to see the maturity levels of the spiritual faculties of others he would choose the subject/s and accordingly expound. If a person or persons would benefit form a detail discourse with parables and clear meaning then the Buddha would utter such teachings; if a person who has matured spiritual faculties, he would utter a brief Dhamma statement with deep meaning. Both ways The Blessed One, with his great compassion wanted to help word-lings to understand the Dhamma for the sake of getting out of Samsara and achieve liberation.

Below we have stated a few extracts from the scriptures showing the two styles of teachings of the Blessed One:

**Lengthy- detailed teachings of the Buddha**

♦ **With Subha brahmin student** [[25]](#endnote-25)

One-time Subha the brahmin student approached the Blessed One asked of the cause and condition why humans are seen to be inferior and superior? …for people are seen to be short-lived and long-lived, sickly and healthy, ugly and beautiful, uninfluential and influential, poor and wealthy, low-born and high-born, stupid and wise.

The Buddha said:

*“Student, beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior”*

Then the Buddha clarified the statement in detail:

\* Reasons for people are seen to be short-lived or long-lived:

When a person performed killing and harming other beings after passing away he will be born in a bad destination, but if he would be reborn in human world, due to his previous bad actions he will have a short life, but if a person abandoned killing and harming other beings, live with compassion for others, after passing away he will be born in a good destination, but if he would be reborn in human world, due to his previous good actions he will have a long life.

\* Reasons for people are seen to be sick or healthy:

When a person performed wounding others by hand or a weapon, because of his bad action, after passing away he will reborn in a bad destination, if he reappear in human world, due to his previous bad action he will suffer from bad health, but if a person avoid such bad actions and have compassion for others, after passing away he would reborn in a good destination; if he reappear in human world, due to his previous good action he will shave good health.

\* Reasons for people are seen to be ugly or beautiful/handsome:

When a person is often angry and hostile in his life and after passing away a he appear in a bad destination, but if he reappear in human world he would be ugly, on the other hand a person is calm, not getting angry and offended, after passing away he will appear in good destination, but if she/he reappear in human world she will be beautiful/ he will be handsome.

\* Reasons for people are seen to be uninfluential or influential:

If a person has tendency to be jealous and envious of others, after passing away he appear in bad destination, but, if he reappears in human world he will be born as uninfluential person/ without any social status, however, a person who lived without jealousy and envy, after his death will appear in good destination, but if he reappears in human world, he will be born as influential person and would receive honour and respect from others.

\* Reasons for people are seen to be poor or wealthy:

When a person who is greedy and ungenerous in his actions, after passing away, appears in a bad destination, but if he reappears in human world, he will be poor, but a person who is generous in his action and support and share with others, after passing away, appears in a good destination, but if he reappears in human world, he will be wealthy.

\* Reasons for people are seen to be low-born or high-born:

When a person is proud and does not honour one who should be honoured and respect, after passing away, he appears in a bad destination, but if he reappears in human world, he will be low born, but a person who pay respect and homage the one who should be honoured and respect, after passing away he appears in a good destination, but if he reappears in human world, he will be high born.

\* Reasons for people are seen to be wise or foolish:

When a person does not visit a spiritual teacher and asked about the wholesome actions and unwholesome actions; what to be cultivated and should not be cultivated for a welfare and happiness for this life and life to come, after passing away, he appears in a bad destination, but if he reappears in human world, he would be stupid, but a person visit a spiritual teacher and asked about the wholesome actions and unwholesome actions… after passing away, he appears in a good destination, but if he reappears in human world, he would be wise.

Subha understood clearly how the Kamma works and was happy and grateful to the Buddha for his meaningful discourse and became follower of the Blessed One.

**See:** MN: Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta.

♦**With Kālāmas of Kesaputta [[26]](#endnote-26)**

Once when the Blessed One was staying in a town called Kesaputta, an abode of Kālāmas, they approached the Buddha and said:

*“Bhante, there are some ascetics and brahmins who come to Kesaputta…they explain their own doctrines, but denounce the doctrines of others… We are perplexed and in doubt, Bhante, as to which of these good ascetics speak truth and which speak falsehood”*

The Buddha said thus:

*“It is fitting for you to be perplexed…to be in doubt. Doubt has arisen in you about a perplexing matter. Come, Kālāmas, do not go by oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by a collection of scriptures, by logical reasoning, by inferential reasoning, by reasoned cogitation, by the acceptance of a view after pondering it, by the seeming competence [of a speaker], or because you think: ‘The ascetic is our guru.’But when, Kālāmas, you know for yourselves: ‘These things are unwholesome; these things are blameworthy; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if accepted and undertaken, lead to harm and suffering,’ then you should abandon them”.*

Then the Buddha elaborated what is unwholesome: the greed, hatred, and delusion are the three unwholesome roots, which underlie all immoral conduct and all defiled states of mind. Then asked them:

*“What do you think, Kālāmas? When greed arises in a person, is it for his welfare or for his harm?”*

They replied: “*For his harm, Bhante.”*

The Buddha asked: *“Kālāmas, a greedy person, overcome by greed, with mind obsessed by it, destroys life, takes what is not given, transgresses with another’s wife, and speaks falsehood; and he encourages others to do likewise. Will that lead to his harm and suffering for a long time?”*

They replied:

*“Yes, Bhante.”*

Then the Buddha extended his teaching to Kālāmas: describing the other two unwholesome : hate and delusion and asked them whether those things are harmful and bring suffering and Kālāmas’ agreed that all unwholesome bring harm and sufferings for a long time.

Then the Blessed One said:

*“Thus, Kālāmas, when we said: ‘Come, Kālāmas, do not go by oral tradition … But when you know for yourselves: “These things are unwholesome; these things are blameworthy; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practiced, lead to harm and suffering,” then you should abandon them,’ it is because of this that this was said”*

The Buddha continued his discourse and asked them whether non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion are for the benefit of a person and they affirmed that all wholesome things bring happiness for a longtime to one self and also to the others. Then the Blessed One elaborated on the benefit of wholesome actions and how the abandon of unwholesome leads to ones’ own liberation. The Buddha intelligently directed Kālāmas to acknowledged his own teaching: - **that abandon all greed, hate and delusion is the way to nibbana**- simply by letting them reflect on their own understanding, without any need for him to force his weight on them.

At the end of the discourse the Kālāmas venerated the Blessed One and said:

*“Excellent, Bhante! … We go for refuge to the Blessed One, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of bhikkhus. Let the Blessed One consider us lay followers who from today have gone for refuge for life.”*

**See:** AN: 3: 65 (5) Kesaputtiya sutta (The Kālāma Sutta), p.108.

**Brief but deep teachings of the Buddha**

To highlight the brief dhamma advices of the Blessed One loaded with deep dhamma, we have selected the following extracts from the scriptures:

♦ **With Ascetic Bahiya darichariya [[27]](#endnote-27)**

In KN: Udana mentioned the story of Bahiya thus [[28]](#endnote-28);

“At one time the Gracious One was dwelling near Sāvatthī, in Jeta’s Wood, at Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then at that time Bāhiya of the Bark Robe was living near Suppāraka, on the bank of the ocean, being venerated… when Bāhiya, had gone into in to seclusion, this reflection arose in his mind: “*Among those in the world who are Worthy Ones, or have entered the path to Worthiness, I am one of them.*” Then a devatā, who was a former blood-relative of Bāhiya, … desiring his welfare, knowing with his mind the reflection in the mind of Bāhiya went to him…and said:

*“You are certainly not a Worthy One… This practice of yours is not one whereby you could be a Worthy One…”*

Then asked by Bāhiya, the Devata said about the Worthy One in this world:

*“There is, Bāhiya, in the northern countries a city by the name of Sāvatthī. There the Gracious One dwells at the present time…a Perfect Sambuddha…and teaches the Dhamma for attaining Worthiness.”*

Then Bāhiya shaken by the devata about him not being a worthy one, decided to meet the Buddha, started a long journey and gradually reached the Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. He inquired about the Blessed One and the monks told him that the Buddha ahs gone to the city of Sāvatthī for almas-round. Then Bāhiya eagerly ran towards the city and saw the Blessed One, approached him venerated him and asked the Buddha to teach him Dhamma. Since, the Buddha already entered among the houses for almas so he said that it is not the proper time to preach. Bāhiya pleaded again and thrice the Buddha said that it was not the proper time to give a teaching, but Bāhiya begged for Dhamma. The Buddha with psychic ability seeing that Bāhiya’s life span is a very short one, with his universal compassion uttered a brief Dhamma advice:

*“… Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: In what is seen there must be only what is seen, in what is heard there must be only what is heard, in what is sensed there must be only what is sensed, in what is cognized there must be only what is cognized. This is the way, Bāhiya, you should train yourself…in what is seen there will be only what is seen, in what is heard there will be only what is heard, in what is sensed there will be only what is sensed, in what is cognized there will be only what is cognized, therefore, you will not be with that; and since, Bāhiya, you will not be with that, therefore, you will not be in that; and since, you will not be in that, therefore, Bāhiya, you will not be here or hereafter or in between the two—just this is the end of suffering.”*

Then through the Buddh’s brief teaching of this Dhamma, Bāhiya’s mind was immediately freed from the pollutants, without attachment. Bāhiya is killed by a cow shortly thereafter and the Buddha instructs the monks to cremate him and construct a stupa in his honour. The Buddha declared among those who quickly attain direct knowledge was Bāhiya Dārucīriya. **See:** AN:1: Foremost, p. 44.



Bhaiya meeting the Buddha. Picture courtesy: https://www.mahamevnawa.org.au/

♦ **With Ascetic Tissametteiya [[29]](#endnote-29)**

Approaching the Buddha, ascetic Tissametteiya asked:

“*Who here in the world is content? …who has no disturbances? …what thoughtful one, having known both ends, is not stuck in the middle? …who do they say is a great man? …who here has escaped the seamstress?”*

The Buddha replied:

*“Leading the spiritual life among sensual pleasures… rid of craving, …ever mindful; a mendicant who, after appraisal, is quenched: that’s who has no disturbances. That thoughtful one, having known both ends, is not stuck in the middle. He is a great man, I declare, he has escaped the seamstress here.”*

**Notes: \*** “Contact, bhikkhus, is one end; the arising of contact is the second end; the cessation of contact is in the middle; and craving is the seamstress. For craving sews one to the production of this or that state of existence. It is in this way that a bhikkhu directly knows what should be directly known; fully understands what should be fully understood; and by doing so, in this very life he makes an end of suffering**” see**: AN6: 61 (7) sutta, p. 352. \*\* The Buddha and arhants are great men, because they have escaped the seamstress.

1. The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, spiritual leader of Tibet. This is a quote from the book:

   ‘Approaching the Buddhist Path’. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Introduction to Majjima Nikaya by Bhikkhu Bodhi, see: MN: p.12, this is one of the 9 major qualities of the Buddha. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. **See**: MN: Vatthūpama Sutta- the Simile of the Cloth. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. He held the view that “growth” should be accomplished in the six senses by experiencing whatever sense objects one has never experienced before without clinging to those that are already familiar. His view thus seems close to the contemporary attitude that intensity and variety of experience is the ultimate good and should be pursued without inhibitions or restrictions, see: MN: Notes: 740, p. 1133. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. The Buddha as ascetic Siddhartha met the King Bimbisara when he was wandering in Magada on his search of noble truth, see; Section 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, Jain leader was a one of the popular religious teachers during the Buddha’s time. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Both horns of the dilemma devised by the Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta presupposed that the Buddha would give a one-sided answer. Now that a one-sided answer has been rejected, the dilemma becomes inapplicable **see**: MN: Notes: 612, p. 1121. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. The 10 views are: (1) “‘The world is eternal; this alone is true, anything else is wrong’: such is my view, householder.” (2) Another wanderer said: “‘The world is non-eternal; this alone is true, anything else is wrong’: such is my view, householder.” (3)–(4) Still another said: “‘The world is finite’ … ‘The world is infinite’ … (5)–(6) ‘The soul and the body are the same’ … ‘The soul is one thing, the body another’ … (7)–(10) ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ … ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ … ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ … ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’; this alone is true, anything else is wrong, see: AN:10: 93.3 View sutta, p. 534. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Pavāraṇā ceremony: at the end of the 3 months rain retreat ( vassāvāsa) which held annually, each bhikkhu/ bhikkhuni in order of seniority invites the sangha to point out any misconduct on his/her part; accordingly the Buddha too invited his disciples. **See**: SN: Notes: 513, p.567. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. This extract is from Introduction to Devatāsamyutta by Bhikkhu Bodhi; see: SN: 1 Devatāsamyutta, p. 45. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. For Buddhism the devas are not immortal gods exercising a creative role in the cosmic process. They are simply elevated beings, blissful and luminous, who had previously dwelt in the human world but had been reborn in the celestial planes as the fruit of their meritorious deeds. With rare exceptions they are just as much in bondage to delusion and desire as human beings, and they equally stand in need of guidance from the Enlightened One. **See**: SN: Introduction: 1. Devatāsamyutta, p.45 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. “Brahmā was the supreme deity of early Brahmanism, conceived as the creator of the universe and venerated by the brahmins with sacrifices and rituals. The Buddha reinterpreted the idea of brahmā and transformed the single, all-powerful deity of the brahmins into a class of exalted gods dwelling in the form realm (rūpadhātu) far above the sense sphere heavens. Their abode is referred to as “the brahmā world,” of which there are many, of varying dimensions and degrees of hegemony…like all sentient beings, the brahmās are impermanent, still tied to the round of rebirth, though sometimes they forget this and imagine themselves immortal. . **See**: SN: Introduction: 6. Brahmasamyutta, p.45 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. The yakkhas are fierce spirits inhabiting remote areas such as forests, hills, and abandoned caves. They are depicted as of hideous mien and wrathful temperament, but when given offerings and shown respect they become benign and may protect people rather than harm them. Many of the shrines that dotted the North Indian countryside were built to honour the yakkhas and secure their favours. Though living in misery, they have the potential for awakening and can attain the paths and fruits of the spiritual life, **see**: Introduction: SN: 10 Yakkasamyutta, p. 55. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Prince Āḷavaka became one of the foremost lay followers of the Buddha; see: AN1: XIV Foremost,p.44 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. **See:** SN: Notes: 594, p.580. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Brahma Baka is from the Brahma world, see: SN: Notes: 386, p.551. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. In the sutta pointed out when Bodhisattva in a former birth was named teacher Kappa and his teacher was Kesava now the Brahma Baka. See: SN:Notes:391, p.552. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. This encounter also mentioned in MN: Brahmanimantanika Sutta. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Arahant bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā was declared by the Buddha the foremost bhikkhunı̄ disciple in expounding the Dhamma, see: MN:Notes: 459, p. 1107. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. He was the husband of venerable Dhammadinnā in her lay life and supported her to become nun. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. 8(13) The story of Nun Kisagotahmi- Verse 114: Treasury of Truth: Dhammapada by Ven. Weragoda Sarada Thero. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. The name “Angulimāla” is an epithet meaning “garland (mālā) of fingers (anguli).” He was the son of the brahmin Bhaggava, a chaplain to King Pasenadi of Kosala. His given name was Ahiṁsaka, meaning “harmless one.” He studied at Takkasilā, where he became his teacher’s favourite. His fellow students, jealous of him, told the teacher that Ahiṁsaka had committed adultery with his wife. The teacher, intent on bringing Ahiṁsaka to ruin, commanded him to bring him a thousand human right-hand fingers as an honorarium. Ahiṁsaka lived in the Jālinı̄ forest, attacking travellers, cutting off a finger of each, and wearing them as a garland around his neck, see: MN: Notes: 820, p. 1140. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Mahā Kaccāna, Master of Doctrinal Exposition by Bhikkhu Bodhi: Wheel No: 405/406: PBS:1995. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. This power was discussed in **section 5,** under Six Unshared Super-Normal Knowledges. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Subha’s father the brahmin Todeyya, was reborn as a dog in his own house because of his extreme stinginess. The Buddha identified him to Subha by getting the dog to dig up some hidden treasure Subha’s father had buried before his death. This inspired Subha’s confidence in the Buddha and moved him to approach and inquire about the workings of kamma. **See:** MN: Notes: 1223, p1174. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. This sutta is best known under the name of “The Kālāma Sutta”; it shows how the Buddha encouraged free inquiry in order to assess the truth. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Before he met the Buddha, he had lived as an ascetic, convinced he was an arahant until a benevolent deity disabused him of this notion. He hastened to visit the Buddha in Sāvatthī. Upon receiving the Buddha’s teaching, he immediately attained arahantship. He was killed by a cow shortly after his attainment. Though he did not receive formal ordination, he is still considered a bhikkhu. **See:** AN:Notes: 99, p. 585. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. **See**: Udāna: 1.10 Bāhiya sutta: translated by Bhikkhu Ãnandajoti. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. He was a student of Bāvari, after listening to the Buddha, became one of his arahant disciples: see: KN:SuttaNipātha: Parayanvagg: Vatthugātā, Translated by Bhokkhu Sujato: w.w.w.suttacentrl.net. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)