

Maṅgala Sutta

– Protection with Blessings

(吉祥經)

Ven. Uttamo Thera (尊者 鄔達摩 長老)

TAIWAN

B. E. 2563

(July 2020 C. E.)

According to the translator—Ven. Uttamo's words, this is strictly for free distribution only, as a gift of Dhamma—Dhamma Dāna. You may re-format, reprint, translate, and redistribute this work in any medium.

目次

Introduction.....	1
Texts—Maṅgala Sutta: Discourse on Protection with Blessings.....	12
1. Not Consorting with Fools.....	18
2. Consorting with the Wise.....	20
3. Paying Homage to Those Worthy of Homage.....	22
4. Residing in a Suitable Place.....	25
5. Having Made Merit in the Past.....	28
6. Directing Oneself Rightly.....	34
Samāpatti (success) and Vipatti (failure).....	37
Having a Good / Bad Existence.....	38
Living at the Time of a Good / Chaotic Period.....	39
Presence / Lacking of Mindfulness, Intelligence and Perseverance.....	41
7. Broad Knowledge (Much Learning).....	44
8. Having Skills.....	50
9. Well Mastered Disciplines.....	54
10. Well Spoken Words.....	61
11. Support for One's Parents.....	69
12. Assistance to One's Wife and Children.....	76
13. Consistency in One's Work.....	84
14. Giving.....	87
15. Living in Rectitude.....	106
16. Assistance to One's Relatives.....	114
17. Deeds that are Blameless.....	118
18. Avoiding, Abstaining from Evil.....	124
19. Refraining from Intoxicants.....	135
20. Being Heedful of the Qualities of the Mind.....	145
21. Respect.....	158
22. Humility.....	163
23. Contentment.....	166
24. Gratitude.....	180
25. Hearing the Dhamma on Timely Occasions.....	188
26. Patience.....	200
27. Compliance/Obedience.....	207
28. Seeing contemplative.....	212
29. Discussing the Dhamma on Timely Occasions.....	228
30. Austerity / 31. celibacy.....	235

Download this document for print:

in general font (12 pt): <https://github.com/twnanda/doc-pdf-etc/blob/master/pdf/protection-with-blessings-full-text-12pt-print.pdf>

in Large font (14.5 pt):

<https://github.com/twnanda/doc-pdf-etc/blob/master/pdf/protection-with-blessings-full-text-14pt-print.pdf>

Namo tassa bhagvato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Introduction

Starting from the beginning of the 21st century, there was a lot of violence going on in many parts of the world; such as 9/11, wars in the Middle East, terrorist activities, etc. These were representing the defilement (kilesa) of dosa—anger, hatred, ill-will, etc. All these were showing the lack of loving-kindness (metta) and compassion, and not a good sign. There were also a lot of harms, dangers and destruction going on from the defilement of lobha—greed, craving, lust, etc. Their impacts can be seen in food poisoning, water, air and earth pollution, deforestation, climate change, etc.

It was quite amazing to see human beings out of greed and lust, to enjoy momentary lowly pleasures by harming themselves. They had done it by knowing the results. For examples, cigarettes and alcohols are harmful to people themselves and others, but still many using and selling it. Another is the lucrative business of arms. Even we can use one sentence to represent their philosophy. For money and sensual pleasures, they will do everything. They only think about money and sensual pleasures, even can give up their lives for it.

Why these unfortunate things and matters happen to us? It is ignorance or delusion, not understanding of the nature of the mind. The Buddha said that untrained mind leading to sufferings and a trained mind leading to happiness. To train our mind, it needs education and practice. Education has a wider sense and meaning and not only making money for a livelihood.

There are two things all human beings can never separate themselves from it. These are education and the law of kamma (action), even they know about it or not. Without proper education, people do not know what is right or wrong, what should be done and what should not be done, etc. With wholesome education, we have knowledge and wise, and without it, we are ignorant and deluded. We can change people only with the right education and practice.

Recently a friend of mine found out that he had lung cancer. When the news came in, I was listening to some Dhamma talks on the parittas. Some translate paritta as auspicious chant and protective charms; it depends on how to use it. The Burmese Buddhist tradition had eleven parittas, and most people had learned them when they

were young. These were some Pāli suttas—Discourses of the Buddha; for example, the Metta Sutta and the Maṅgala Sutta—the discourse on loving kindness and the discourse on blessings.

Parittas are for the protection of dangers and illnesses. The parittas are not only can protect from the external dangers but also the internal ones, such as greed, hatred, delusion, etc. with its practice.

The internal dangers are more important than external dangers. External dangers can harm us only for this life. But internal danger will follow us to the future and beyond. If we can protect ourselves from the internal dangers of defilement and then everything will be finished. External dangers are also depending on them.

The chances of falling into painful births or destinations are waiting for us at any time in the future. Nowadays, human beings not only do not know how to protect both dangers but also create more and more dangers for them. Because of human ignorance and craving, the Mother Earth is not a safety place anymore. If we are nourishing the internal dangers of greed, hatred, and delusion or our real enemies, then the situations will become worse. Human beings are not only harming to each other but also the Earth and its nature. Some years ago, a well-known Buddhist scholar of Thailand wrote two books on science and economics from the Buddhist points of view.

These were: “Sustainable Science” and “Buddhist Economics”. It is worthwhile to read and give us a lot of food for thought about how to use human knowledge properly and wisely (including the natural resources). One of the Buddha’s qualities was “Teacher of Gods and Humans”—*Satthā devamanussānaṃ*. The Buddha knew very clearly and completely about the mind and how to handle it. If we study and follow his teachings accordingly will solve many human problems. Some animals and plants were already extinct because of human actions.

What about the human race? At least there will be a lot of sufferings and problems, and the Earth becomes a very unpleasant place to live. (There was evidence in some of the suttas.) This depends on how we behave and utilize human knowledge properly and wisely in politics, economics, science, technology, media, etc. Nowadays, there are many human and environmental problems from these outcomes. Why do these ugly things happen? We are clever in worldly knowledge and only interest in them. Not take moral values and knowledge as very important and fundamental.

Nowadays, human beings urgently need moral education. It is quite fundamental for us. It teaches us how to become a true human being. Without it and however in

material progress, we are making can lead to destruction. Moral education is likened to the root of a tree, and other knowledge is the trunk, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits. Morality and virtues are very important in societies. It brings happiness and peace among people. It is also the foundation for a higher mind or spiritual development.

In the Cakkavatti, Digha Nikāya (DN.26 Cakkavattisuttaṃ), the Buddha explained as; without morality and virtues, human beings committed unwholesome actions, and their life span declined and affected nature. All the Buddha's teachings can be combined into threefold training; sīla, samādhi, and pañña—morality, concentration and wisdom. In Thai and Burmese, the words for education are sueksa (Thai Pāli for sikkhā) and pyin-nya (Burmese Pāli for pañña). Here sikkhā is training and pañña is wisdom. Buddhism is closer to education than a religion. The Buddha taught human beings about the mind and how to train it.

Untrained mind brings sufferings and disturbances, and a trained mind brings happiness and peace. Therefore, the Buddha's teachings were the highest education which man never encountered before. It can protect the human race from all dangers and disasters. It is universal, practical, and workable in our daily life. Our destinations and directions are in our mind. Which way do we want to go? The way to Heaven or Hell, all are in our mind.

There was an interesting discourse by the Buddha, Sedaka Sutta in Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN.47.19 Sedakasuttaṃ). It was about protection. Once in the past, an acrobat set up his bamboo pole and addressed his apprentice to climb the bamboo pole and stood on his shoulder. He told the disciple to protect him and vice versa. When this was said, the disciple replied that this was not the way to protect each other.

The right way was the teacher should protect himself. And also at the same time, the disciple should protect himself. In this way, each self-guarded and self-protected they would display their skills, and got down safely from the bamboo pole. The Buddha supported the method of the disciple and he taught the monks in the following way. One would protect oneself; should the foundations of mindfulness—satipaṭṭhāna be practiced. One would protect others should satipaṭṭhāna be practiced.

By protecting oneself, one protected others and to protect others and protected oneself. And then the Buddha continued to say how to protect oneself and protect others. The way of protecting oneself and protected others was by developing and cultivating the four Satipaṭṭhāna. The way of protecting others and protecting oneself was patience, harmlessness, good will, and sympathy. Therefore, if everyone wants to be free from dangers, misfortunes, illnesses, etc., one has to protect oneself first. If

each person protects for oneself and protecting others are already finished.

For the 45 years of his teaching, the Buddha taught a lot for the welfare of human beings in many different ways on mundane and supramundane levels. With the knowledge of the Buddha's teachings, we know how to think, speak, and act accordingly to protect oneself and protecting others and nature. We will have detrimental consequences to ourselves, societies, nature, and environments if we behave wrongly, improperly and foolishly. Now some of these things are already happening around the world. Nowadays, the world urgently needs right and wise educations, instead of wrong and unwise educations. Do human beings need survival or indulgence? Everyone must think seriously about this most important question. Even as a billionaire, all the wealth becomes useless when he dies early with illness because he cannot enjoy it and yet take a penny with him after death. This can happen to anyone due to much pollution and global warming today.

In Theravadin Buddhist countries, Burma, Thailand, etc. lay people invite the monks for paritta chantings and at the same time making paritta water (also translated as holy water). Some monks with the chanting made the water in cups and pots to rise up with the bubbles, even overflowed. These kinds of monks were very rare indeed, and not many of them.

Recently one of them in Burma was Sayadaw U Uttamasara (1909-?).

He was well known for his love and compassion; even he may be one of the first or few Buddhist monks spreading the teachings of the Buddha to hill tribe people. In his talk on the “Power of Parittas”, he mentioned that to become effective, it must be the parittas of the Buddha. This kind of paritta water has protective and healing power. Some asked Sayadaw was why the Parittas had this power.

Because the parittas were about the attributes of the triple gems, the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha; the asseveration of truth (sacca) and loving-kindness (metta) were made by the Buddha and the Bodhisatta of in some of his past lives. Also, perhaps some asked if anyone reciting them would show the power clearly. His answer was not everyone reciting the parittas showed its power clearly or evidently. Some had it, and some did not.

What makes them different? His answer was that there are differences between them on volition, metta, karuṇā, sīla, samādhi, and paññā.

The one who listens to the paritta chanting should have three factors:

1. Not committing the five heavy karmas (patricide, matricide, killing the arahant, shedding the blood of the Buddha, splitting the saṅgha)
2. Believe in the law of Karma (i. e., has the right view)
3. Must have faith in the power of the parittas which were the Buddha's words

The reciter of the parittas should have three factors:

1. Has studied and learned the parittas rightly or correctly in their meanings and grammars.
2. Recite fully of them.
3. Has the volition of good-will (metta) for the listeners.

Here I want to present two incidents on the effect of the parittas. One had happened in Burma and connected with Ven. Ledi Sayadaw and the other in Thailand to a forest monk. In 1906 Ven. Ledi Sayadaw spent his 40th vassa (rain retreat) in the vicinity of Prome City. The same year in August during the raining season Henzada area was without rain and had a drought. This was a delta area in lower Burma and usually had a lot of rain.

Therefore, the farmers in that area had difficulties. Then they sent application letters to the government offices for not be able to give the taxes. At that time the high commissioner of Irrawadian division, Mr. Maxwell was inspecting this area and coming to Henzada City. He had been seen the situations there. Therefore, he summoned all the government officers and respected people of that area; and then ordered them to invite Ven. Ledi Sayadaw for a dhamma ceremony to solve the problem.

Some did not believe that Ven. Sayadaw could solve this problem. Anyhow to follow the order some officers and a few respectable men went to Prome for the invitation. People in Henzada grandly prepared for the Dhamma Ceremony. After arriving there, they invited Sayadaw. It was the rain retreat period for the monks.

Therefore, he told them that it was better for him after the rain retreat (The Buddhist monks' rain retreats are usually between July and October). But they explained to him the importance of rain because many plants would damage, and also many fishes, shrimps and other animals had already died; then they will encounter with famine if the fields did not get water for another week. Therefore, Sayadaw accepted their

invitation immediately. They arranged the Irrawaddy postal steamship for the next day journey.

And then Sayadaw told his disciple U Pandita as follow; “Now I have the chance to show the Henzada people about the power of water duties which I had done for over 20 years before. It included offering water to the Shwe-zi-gon Ceti and the monks for drinking, washing, and bathing. The result of water dāna (offering) is at the time of water shortage or no water; and will get it with the wishes for water.” (Shwe-zi-gon Pagoda is a well-known ceti in Monywa, upper Burma. Sayadaw not only did the water duties every day to the ceti and his monastery, but also to the other monasteries near the vicinity.)

Starting from that night, Sayadaw remembered and contemplated his water duties; using the rosary beads to count the paritta chant of the Bodhisatta King Fish or Rain Paritta. (Not mentioned how many times he was reciting with the help of rosary beads counting. It must be many times. Sayadaw was well-known for his great energy.)

And he spread special metta to the rain god and sky god. When the steamship came near to the Henzada City port and the whole sky suddenly changed and covered in rain cloud and rained heavily with thunders. It rained heavily for two hours that the steamship could not enter the port and had to anchor in the middle of the river. The High Commissioner Mr. Maxwell and other people were waiting for Sayadaw on the bank.

Some years ago a forest monk stayed in the retreating forest near the Thai Burmese border in Kanchanaburi, west of Bangkok. This forest is called Dtow Dun—Black Tortoise. One day he came back from Bangkok after a medical check and on the way staying a night at a branch monastery. This was a very wide area and known to some monks as a haunted place. The north of the area had an old Sālā (an open wooden building for meals and practice), and a few old kutis (monks dwelling place or hut) closed to the mountain range.

Between the North and the South area also had a newly-built concrete Sālā, some new kutis and including an open wooden Sālā for guest monks. This guest Sālā had a small room at the northern side, except that the whole building was opened. The monk settled into the small room. At round about 8 to 9 p.m. he heard a loud sound outside his room. It was like someone had dropped a heavy object with a loud thud sound from the ceiling to the floor. Therefore, he went out and had a check. Nothing was there, and he went back to the room. It happened like this for three times, and he knew it was the ghost. Therefore, he requested the unseen being not to disturb him, and then chanted the Metta Sutta.

He also spread metta (loving-kindness) to the ghost. After that, it stopped haunting him and never happening again. This ghost was a violent ghost. Because after sometimes above incident some monks came to Dtow Dum for the summer retreat and had to spend the night there. One of the monks was during the sleep haunted by this ghost violently and had an injury on his head. According to the local information a man had been murdered near this place before.

Dtow Dum forest is an amazing and interesting place. It is worthy of recording here and connecting with the protection of nature and environments. Most people never think as human beings are part of nature. Therefore, we are exploiting the Earth in an extreme and alarming way. The earth, water, air, and heat give us lives. We depend on them for survivals. In some suttas, the Buddha even mentioned how human minds and actions affected nature. We are interdependent with each other. If we harm to nature, it will harm us. It will destroy us if we destroy nature. It was like the Newtonian Dynamic Law, action to reaction. Negative action has a negative result. Positive action has a positive result.

A Japanese scientist had already made many researches on this point of how our mind states affected the water crystals. The Mother Earth is likened to a physical body. If any part of the body is damaged or harmed, it cannot function properly or even dies. We should have gratitude to her because it cares us like a mother. Ingratitude is the sign of an inferior person and has no good future for him. Therefore, , to survive and have a future, human beings must take care and look after the Earth.

Even though Dtow Dum is not a virgin forest, a lot of wild animals still living there. The forest monks and some important lay people had tried to protect it from destruction. A businesswoman had a contract and mining of tin-tungsten ore in this area already for some years. Later she invited two forest monks and established a forest monastery there to protect the forest. It started the project in 1994. Two kutis (monk dwelling huts) and an open sālā were built on the top of the hill. The open sālā was on the edge of the hill and overlooked the valley with the green forest. It was used as a meditation and meeting hall. And an open eating hall was also built at the base of the hill.

Later an inner Sālā also was built deep into the forest for the monks during the summer retreat. Because Northeast Thailand was so hot that unpleasant with the heat there. Therefore, every year a group of monks comes down here for two months to stay in the deep forest for practice. Usually, they come here in March and go back to Northeast Thailand before the Vesak (Vesākha). (Vesak is the full moon day of May

and celebrating for the birth, enlightened and passing away of the Buddha). Every year before the monks come here for a summer retreat; the miners help to build some bamboo platforms across the deep forest. There are a lot of big bamboos in this forest.

Some of these big bamboos are the homes of tiny squirrels. These are lovely and cute little creatures; never being seen in day time for moving around. In the beginning, we do not know that these small rounded holes are their homes. At night when I looked into it with torchlight and found the cute little creature inside curiously looking back at you with the bright eyes. In Rājagaha King Bimbisāra offered the Bamboo Grove forest monastery to the Buddha and the Saṅgha and mentioned it as the Squirrel's Sanctuary. Did it have any connection with these cute little creatures?

From the eating hall to the mine area had to walk a few hours along the rugged stony stream road, and only four wheels drive car could be used. In 1994 and 1995 there were heavy raining that even could not go in and out with cars. The mainstream was roaring down by carrying rocks and tree trunks along the way. Most bamboo bridges were carrying away by water, and two monks stayed there could not go down for the meal (They ate one meal a day at 8 a.m.)

Therefore, some miners had to carry some foods for them. The mine owner could not go out for buying foods and rice for the monks. To solve this problem, an army helicopter brought some rice bags for the monks and the miners. So the forest monks had to eat only forest vegetables for sometimes.

This was the tropical rain forest and teeming with wildlife. Such as elephants, bears, tigers (including black leopard), tapirs, forest pigs, deer, monkeys, a squirrel liked animal without tail, three or four times bigger than a large squirrel with the plump body and yellow furs, bamboo squirrels, white snakes, boas, green bamboo vipers etc. (There can also be other animals). We invited bird watchers from Bangkok and with their research found out over 200 species of birds in this area. There are two species of hornbills, white and yellow. The white hornbill is bigger and when flying making a loud flapping sound in the air. Mostly they are flying in a small group.

There are also many songbirds. Once time I heard a small bird making the sound like playing with a flute. There were also some harmful insects; such as ticks appear in winter and some are too small that cannot see with the naked eyes. Only after biting with tiny red spots appeared and very itchy; leeches appear in raining season; gnats; bees; some insects had very poisonous stings; and with both types of malaria mosquitoes. Some monks and miners were contracted with malaria very often. Before the monks came here some miners and their family members died with the disease.

There were not much majestically tall trees had left. Its trunk was straight and good for building a house. There were three incidents encountered with big cats. There was a white tiger's family living in this forest. In 1996, January 16th (this was also the day when Ajahn Cha passed away in 1992, a monk after his morning meal went up to the hill. On the way, he met three white tigers from a stone throw distance. They crossed the path from right to left under the bright sun and looked very majestic.

There was forest fire during the summer time with very hot temperature. One time at the base of the hill, some miners caught a white tiger cub. At that time, there was a forest fire burning. Therefore, the miners' tried to extinguish it. Then they saw the white mother tiger, and two cubs tried to escape the fire. The 3rd time was during the two months summer retreated period. One night a western novice went back to the deep forest from the outer sālā holding a candle lamp.

Unexpectedly he met a big black cat watching at him quietly near his path. He was so frightened that he did not know what to do. (You cannot run at night with a dim light candle lamp) With his whole body was shaking, he had to move on. He had escaped the danger but became sick. Most humans fear wild beasts. Man is more dangerous than beasts. Man is not only dangerous for animals, even to one's fellow human beings and nature. (There is a lot of contemplation on this point in modern-day situations.)

Man can create heavens and hells on this planet and even can transcend them. It depends on the types of education we follow. There was a major stream coming down from the inside deep forest which other side was the Thai-Burmese border. This stream was coming down towards the mining area. On half way of the hill, the stream passed through a high cliff and created a big waterfall. Its sound could be heard very clearly during the night because the whole area was very quiet.

The stream water was cool and clear like a crystal. Staying in this forest after a few years and it became an unforgettable place for a forest monk. Sometimes I went to the city of Bangkok could feel the great differences between the natural life in the forest and artificial life in the big city. The life with nature was peaceful and calm, with joy and happiness which any material progress, science, and technology could never bring about to man. It even can increase greed, hatred, and delusion, which create a lot of sufferings if we cannot use them wisely or properly.

This point everyone knows, and no-one can deny about it. Earth, air, water pollution, climate changes, more natural disasters, chemicals in the food chain, weapons of mass destruction, 21st-century terrorism, and polluted media, etc. there is no end to

mention about them. These facts are the outcomes of the human mind. Without our polluted minds, these things cannot arise. Living in nature sometimes only can be realized that man is part of nature. If nature survives, then man can survive. If nature is destroyed, then we are in destruction. We are in interdependence and mutually co-existing. Therefore, protecting oneself and one protects others and nature. There is a question arising in my mind. Why Dtoow Dum a small area is teeming with wildlife? This is my contemplation.

Because human beings had destroyed a lot of forests and these animals needed a place for survival. Therefore, they had to be moved into any forest to survive. It was very similar today refugee problems in the Middle East, Africa, parts of Asia, and Latin America. For their survivals, these refugees had to move into Europe and surrounding countries.

All these external problems were warning human beings to be careful with our behaviors and actions, from politics, economics, sciences, technologies, media, etc. So all are coming back to our minds, wise educations, and actions. By protecting oneself, one protects others and nature. One more question is arisen in my mind. Where are we going to live if the Earth is becoming uninhabitable? It is not a myth. It is a reality and sooner or later will become a truth. Who can answer and solve this most important problem? Now we all are at the breaking point we still have time to correct ourselves, otherwise it is only in suicidal situation.

The following dhamma reflections are from two main sources; from the dhamma talks by two Burmese Bhikkhus; Ven. Sayadaw Dr. Nandamalarbhivamsa and Sayadaw Uttama; using their talks and dhamma from other sources for the reflection and contemplation. If there is something wrong or mistakes; then all of them are mine and nothing to do with others. Contemplation and reflection are very important parts of Buddhist practice. It is very good for dealing with problems in daily life. If it becomes a habit, it will strengthen our wisdom faculties.

It can also be called *yoniso manasikāra*—wise attention, proper attention, careful attention, which is the forerunner of *paññā*—wisdom. With unwise attention, defilement arise and increasing them if they have already arisen. And wise attention is the opposite. My main attention is on the three parittas or suttas; *Maṅgala Sutta*, *Metta Sutta*, and *Khandha Sutta*. *Maṅgala Sutta*—the discourse on blessings was dealing with the ways of different levels of blessing, from mundane to supramundane levels of achievements.

Metta and *Khandha Suttas*—the discourses on good-will, loving-kindness, loving friendliness, and snakes are dealing with love and kindness to all living beings, which

today world urgently need because there are a lot of conflicts and violence going on like severe climate changes. The Buddha's teachings or educations are the best medicines for all the ills of human beings.

Texts

— Maṅgala Sutta: Discourse on Protection with Blessings

1. Asevanā ca bālānaṃ : Not consorting with fools.
2. Panditanañ ca sevanā : Consorting with the wise.
3. Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ : Paying homage to those worthy of homage.
Etam maṅgalam-uttamaṃ : This is the highest protection with a blessing.

4. Patirūpa desa-vāso ca : Residing in a suitable place.
5. Pubbe ca kata-puññatā : Having made merit in the past.
6. Atta-sammā-paṇidhi ca : Directing oneself rightly.
Etam maṅgalam-uttamaṃ : This is this highest protection with a blessing.

7/8. Bāhu-saccañ ca sippañ ca : Broad knowledge, skill.
9. Vinayo ca susikkhito : Well-mastered discipline.
10. Subbhāsītā ca yā vācā : Well-spoken words.
Etam maṅgalam-uttamaṃ : This is the highest protection with a blessing.

11. Mātā-pitu upatthānaṃ : Support for one's parents.
12. Putta-dārassa saṅgaho : Assistance to one's wife and children.
13. Anākulā ca kammantā : Consistency in one's work.
Etam maṅgalam-uttamaṃ : This is the highest protection with a blessing.

14/15. Dānañca dhamma cariyā ca : Giving, living in rectitude.
16. Ñātakānañ ca saṅgaho : Assistance to one's relatives.
17. Anavajjāni kammāni : Blameless deeds.
Etam maṅgalam-uttamaṃ : This is the highest protection with a blessing.

18. Āratī viratī pāpā : Avoiding, abstaining from evil.
19. Majja-pānā ca saññaṃ : Refraining from intoxicants.
20. Appamādo ca dhammesu : Being heedful of the qualities of the mind.
Etam maṅgalam-uttamaṃ : This is the highest protection with a blessing.

21/22. Gāravo ca nivāto ca : Respect, humility.
23/24. Santutthī ca kataññutā : Contentment, gratitude.

25. Kālena dhammassavanaṃ : Hearing the dhamma on timely occasions
Etam maṅgalam-uttamaṃ : This is the highest protection with a blessing.

26/27. Khantī ca sovacassatā : Patience, compliance.

28. Samanānañ-ca dassanaṃ : Seeing contemplatives.

29. Kālena dhamma-sācakchā : Discussing the Dhamma on timely occasions.

Etam maṅgalam-uttamaṃ : This is the highest protection with a blessing.

30/31. Tapo ca brahma-cariyañ-ca : Austerity, celibacy.

32. Ariya-saccāna-dassanaṃ : Seeing the Noble Truths.

33. Nibbāna-sacchikiriya ca : Realizing Unbinding.

Etam maṅgalam-uttamaṃ : This is the highest protection with a blessing.

34. Phutthassa loka-dhammehi, : A mind that, when touched by the ways of the world,

Cittam yassa na kampati : Is unshaken.

35/36/37. Asokaṃ virajaṃ khemaṃ : Sorrowless, dustless, secure.

Etam maṅgalam-uttamaṃ : This is the highest protection with a blessing.

Etādisāni katvāna,

Sabbattham-aparājitā;

Sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti

Taṃ-tesaṃ maṅgalam-uttaman”nti

Everywhere undefeated

when acting in this way,

people go everywhere in well-being:

This is the highest protection with a blessing.

Nearly all the Theravadin Buddhists heard this sutta chanting before. The Buddhist children learned it from monasteries and schools. At the time of the Buddha men and deities pondered, discussed and argued about the true meaning of blessings (maṅgala). Different people had a different view, and they could not agree to the twelve years of debates.

The Pāli word maṅgala means auspicious and often referring to lucky signs.

In this discourse, it had the meanings of a thing conducive to happiness and welfare. Therefore, most scholars translated it as Blessing.

The question of the debate among human beings was: “What is the blessing?” Everyone has his/her views and opinion of the types of blessing. These depend on their experiences with the five senses of eye, ear, nose, tongue and body. There is nothing strange that they do not come to a final agreement. Everyone has his/her level of knowledge, so the understanding is different. A man hungering and thirsting for money will think about money; so, these people are competing and fighting for power (e.g., politicians). Therefore, every human’s view and thinking are very important because it relates to his/her action. Right view and thought lead to right actions, then the outcomes are peace and happiness. The opposite ways lead to sufferings, chaos, problems and dangers.

At first, the question was asked starting from human beings and then earth deities, deities ruled by four divine kings, it continued up until the deities of the Akaniṭṭha realm (the Highest Pure Abode—dwelt with ariyan brahma gods). It seemed even ariyan brahma gods could not give the right satisfied answers except by the Buddha.

So, a commotion about blessings arose in the world. Here the word commotion is for the Pāli—kolāhala and some translate as rumour which is not exact meaning. Rumour can be true or may be not. Kolāhala always come true.

There were five kinds of kolāhala mentioned in the Texts. These were:

1. Commotion about the aeon (Kappakolāhala)

This was Doomsday mentioned in the Buddhist Text. The desire-sphere deities (kāmaloka devatas) made announcements to human as followed. The end of the world would occur after 100,000 years. The world would perish, the great ocean would dry up, the Earth and mountains would burn up and perish. All these destructions would occur up to the Brahma World (i.e., the first jhanic place, burnt down the three lower Brahma Worlds). They ask the humans to develop the four Brahmavihāras (loving kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity), attend on parents, respect the elders in the family (these were also mentioned in the Maṅgala Sutta). They should be vigilant and heedful.

2. Commotion about a wheel-turning monarch

The same desire-sphere deities wandered among humans and made the announcements that a wheel-turning monarch would arise in the world after 100,000 years.

3. Commotion about a Buddha

The deities of the pure abodes (i.e., ariyan brahma gods) filled with rapture and joy proclaimed the excellent attributes of a Buddha. They wandered among humans and made the announcements that a Buddha would arise in the world after 100,000 years.

4. Commotion about blessings

The deities of the pure abodes wandered among humans and made the announcements that the Buddha would explain the blessings after twelve years.

5. Commotion about the way of a sage (moneyya)

The deities of the pure abodes wander among humans and made the announcements that a monk would meet the Buddha and ask about the way of a sage (moneyya) after seven years. The way to arahantship is called moneyya. Moneyya practices are very severe and more difficult than dhutaṅga practices. With every Buddha only had one disciple for this practice. Nālaka hermit was the one who practiced moneyya (see Suttanipāta, 3. Mahāvaggo, 11. Nālakasuttaṃ; Sn 3-11 Nālaka Sutta).

At last, the commotion about the blessings arrived at the ruler of the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven—Sakka. He was wise and knew that no-one could give the right answer except the Buddha. So, he sent a young devata to the Buddha and asked the question about blessings (maṅgala).

The young deity went to the Buddha for the answer, and he was staying in Sāvatti at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

The Buddha gave the answers to different kinds of blessing from the mundane to the supramundane levels. Buddhists recite it for blessings and free from dangers. Reciting is reminding us and for contemplation. The most important point is put into practice. All the Buddha's teachings were nearly on human beings and the human mind. It was more like education than a religion. A being born into the human world has two ways to choose and walk along on one of the paths.

One is downfall and failures. The other is development and success. These are the unwholesome and wholesome ways or negative and positive ways. All of them are related to the law of actions (kamma) or cause and effect. To choose the right one, we need wholesome education and have to rely on the teachings of the Buddha, noble beings, and ancient sages.

There was also a counterpart of Maṅgala Sutta in the Suttanipāta called Downfall—Parābhava Sutta (Sn 1-6. Parābhavasuttaṃ). This was a deity came to ask the Buddha

about the causes of a person's failure and leading to perish. The question appeared in their minds after the deities knew about the blessings. We should not only know about the progress and success in life and after but also the causes of failures and downfalls; so that we should know what should have to follow and what should have to avoid. The Buddha gave the causes one by one up to the twelfth cause and stopped there because the deity stopped asking.

The causes of downfall in the sutta were:

- 1. One who detests the Dhamma (e.g., the ten causes of wholesome kamma);
- 2. Associating with bad people and preferring their teaching (e.g., the ten unwholesome kamma);
- 3. Indolence;
- 4. Not supporting one's parents, not taking care of them, not serving them (with this point we can appreciate the wisdom of the Chinese sages—the Shao-tao as a foundation of progress);
- 5. Deceptive speech;
- 6. Miserliness (Here the Buddha mentioned very rich people indulge in sensual pleasures and a miser to others. Even in U.S. we heard news about a wealthy politician using public funds for pleasure);
- 7. Social pride, look down on one's relatives;
- 8. Sexual promiscuity, indulgence in liquor, fondness for gambling;
- 9. Not content with one's wife, with others' wives and prostitutes;
- 10. With old age marries a girl and could not sleep from jealousy over her (there was a Thai news some years ago, a 74 years-old man married a 14 years-old girl);
- 11. Debauched, spendthrift;
- 12. With little wealth and strong craving, no contentment, with strong craving and thirst for power (we can see that politician's thirst for money and business men's thirst for power in today world).

After the Buddha explaining the twelfth cause for downfall and the deity stopped for asking other causes. The reason was he found no pleasure in the causes of downfall. Countless of deities had strong saṃvega in the teaching and practiced accordingly, attained the fruits of stream-entry, one-returner and non-returner respectively. Although the Buddha stopped the causes of downfall further, we can continue the contemplation. In the small booklet of "Abhidhamma in Daily Life" by Sayadaw Ashin Janakābhivamsa it mentioned about the unwholesome and wholesome mental factors (akusala and kusala cetasikas). There are fourteen unwholesome mental states or factors effecting the mind (citta) towards negative directions and results. These are:

① Delusion ② Shamelessness ③ Fearlessness of wrong ④ Restlessness ⑤ Greed ⑥ Wrong view ⑦ Conceit ⑧ Hatred ⑨ Envy ⑩ Avarice ⑪ Worry ⑫ Sloth ⑬ Torpor and ⑭ Doubt.

There are fourteen mental factors effecting the mind towards positive directions and results. These are:

① Faith ② Mindfulness ③ Shame of doing wrong ④ Fear of doing wrong ⑤ Non-greed ⑥ Non-hatred ⑦ Non-delusion ⑧ Loving friendliness ⑨ Compassion ⑩ Appreciative joy ⑪ Equanimity ⑫ Right speech ⑬ Right action ⑭ Right Livelihood

We can select out the roots related to these two groups of unwholesome and wholesome mental factors; we will get three roots from each group. For unwholesome roots are: ① Greed ② Hatred ③ Delusion. For wholesome roots are: ① Non-greed ② Non-hatred ③ Non-delusion.

From the lists of unwholesome dhammas and its roots, and wholesome dhammas and its roots, human beings have the choices to choose for their downfall and welfare. Following the path of unwholesome roots will lead to downfall and sufferings; whereas it will lead to development, success, peace and happiness with the wholesome roots. People without proper knowledge and education usually end up with the negative path. Instead of making friends with the wholesome roots, they choose the enemies as teachers. The Buddha not only taught about downfall and blessings but also transcended them. Therefore, there are three path or ways opening to everyone. It is the good time and opportunity now to transcend dukkha by following the 37 or 38 blessings which mentioned in the Maṅgala Sutta. We should not miss this chance.

(It is also interesting to compare some of the mundane blessings mentioned by the Buddha with some of the teachings of the ancient Chinese sages. There were some similarities between them. Maybe this was one of the reasons Chinese people easily accepted Buddhism when it was spreading into China.)

We are learning the Maṅgala Sutta by heart even at a young age as children. But we are still distancing ourselves with it from the practical way of life. Therefore, we have to study and learn it and then use it in daily life.

1. Not Consorting with Fools

In the suttas, firstly, the Buddha talked about what should not be done. After that, he continued to talk about what should be done. Someone will have problems and suffering if he acts something which should not be done. Therefore, it is more important. This is not difficult to understand, but if we observe the current world situations in every aspect of it, something is going wrong. A sentient being after taking birth into the human world he or she is not alone and with family members surrounding them.

So man has companions. Each family is the smallest part of the society. Not only human but also animal is the same. The differences between them are a man has knowledge. Every man has two kinds of companion. Natural selection or sent by the law of kamma and later with one's own choice or selection. By the law of kamma, you meet this or that family member. With one of the past karmas, someone was born into the family of fishing village, into a Buddhist family, etc.... Later in life one makes one's own choice and consorting with drunkards, drug addicts, gamblers, etc. (these are fools), and with Buddhists who are practicing Dhamma, etc... (these are wise-men). There is a lot to say and contemplate about for these two kinds of companions. And then we will see the importance of the law of kamma and the wholesome educations. (These two kinds of knowledge and action are very important for everyone; if not, he comes to human world just wasting times and doing stupid things only.)

Blessing (*maṅgala*) has the meaning of the cause for progress or success. Not consorting with fools was so important that the Buddha described it first as a foundation. Without following this instruction and other blessings are also out of reach. What is a fool (*bāla*)? Someone has unwholesome thoughts, speech, and action is *bāla*. It leads to bad results. Therefore, he is a fool. Unwholesome energy or element can spread like a disease. This is the nature of energy. Element also has the nature of the combination. For example, Ven. Sāriputta was foremost in wisdom, and his energy spread to his students, who also had wisdom. The monk Devadatta was a renegade to the Buddha, and his students also like him. The negative element or energy not only affected human beings but also to nature, such as animals, trees, fruits, weather, etc.

Positive or wholesome energy is also in the same way. If there are more fools in the world, and it will lead to destruction. Living together with fools is like living with enemies. The Buddha even mentioned that fools made sufferings. If we contemplate

the current situations around the world will appreciate this point. Someone consorts with fools not only without benefits in his life but also next life to come. For example, prince Ajātasattu was consorting with the renegade monk Devadatta, later killed his father King Bimbisāra and after death fell into hell. Consuming of unwholesome things such as drugs, alcohol, polluted media, etc. is making a person becoming a fool. At last at the dhammic level, association with the unwholesome dhamma (greed, aversion, delusion, etc.) is foolish and with the wholesome dhamma is wise.

Commentary gave some examples of fool at the time of the Buddha. They were the six teachers such as Purana Kassapa; some monks as Devadatta, Kokālika, and the young woman Ginca etc.)

The Buddha, noble beings, sages and wise men always warned people of the dangers and misfortunes brought to them by the fools. In a Jātaka story, the Bodhisatta was the hermit Akitti. Sakka, the king of devas offered a boon to the wise hermit Akitti. The hermit made the following wise prayers of boon from him. (J. iv. 236f.; Jat. 480)

These were: he might never see or listen to fools, never dwell with them and might not concert nor agree with them. After the hermit made his boon from him, Sakka asked the hermit why he made these wishes.

His answers were: the fool led one to ruin and enjoined one in reckless ways; it was difficult to guide the fool to be good, the fool easily got upset and did not know disciplines.

All these points were very important to anyone and not only for the Bodhisatta. The Buddha Gotama had suffered a lot from many lives as Bodhisatta until his last life by association with Devadatta. In a very long one of their past lives, Devadatta carried the grudge with him to the Bodhisatta out of jealousy and hate. Therefore, he always harmed the Bodhisatta whenever and wherever they met (see many jātika stories about their meetings).

In a sutta of Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN.3.1 Bhayasuttaṃ), the Buddha gave an analogy for a fool: “Just as a fire that starts in a house made of reeds or grass burns down even a strong and good house closed by; so too, whatever disasters, calamities and perils arose all arise on account of the fool, not on account of the wise person.” They brought all these dangers and misfortunes to others. So, the Buddha compared the fools like a rotten fish which smeared a leaf and became smelly by using to wrap it (J. iv. 271; Jat. 503 Sattigumba-Jātaka).

2. Consorting with the Wise

Why did the Buddha encourage us to consort with the wise? It is in order to absorb and saturate wholesome energy or elements into our hearts. The Buddha said: living with fools is living with enemies; with the wise is living with family and relatives. The wise have three characteristics: having good, wholesome thoughts, speech, and actions. Practicing accordingly with wholesome education only can be a wise person.

Therefore, knowing and not practicing is not a wise man. The Chinese saying said; “Talking without doing is phant ren”. Phant ren means impostor. Are we in this class? It will become a wise man after knowing and practicing if not only an educated fool. With a lot of knowledge and could talk is still not wise. Live life without dangers and enemies, no suffering and fear, only can be called wise.

The Jātaka story about two parrots was a good example of the fool and the wise. Two parrot chicks were blown away by the wind; one of them landed at the place of a group of hermits and was looked after by them. It grew up and had the kind nature and good behavior like the group of hermits. The other chick landed at the place of bandits and was looked after by them. It grew up and had violent nature and bad behavior like the bandits. Therefore, making friends and association with people are a very important part of human life. And we should not take it lightly.

The commentary mentioned some benefits by association with the wise. They were like guards in the time of dangers, like a lamp for someone in the dark, like someone obtaining foods and drinks when he suffered hunger and thirst. The wise were able to dispel dangers, disasters, calamities, etc. of those who took their advice and suggestion.

The commentary mentioned the Buddha, ariyan disciples, bodhisattas, etc. as wise people. The benefits we can receive by associating with the wise are very clear if we read and study the stories in suttas (such as Dhammapada, Jātaka, etc.). We should contemplate the following question. “Are today human beings becoming wiser?” We will get the right answer with the knowledge of Buddha’s teachings and sages if we contemplate the current world situations.

In the past Sāriputta answered his former teacher Sañjaya as there were more fools than wise-man in the world. I don’t think today’s world is better than the time of Buddha, or even worse than ever. We have now reached the level of a breaking point because of misusing the material progress. We cannot assume that we are better than

the ancients if we cannot deal with all the pollution and global warning problems properly. Whether we may survive or perish is in our own hands; if we want to correct ourselves, we have to follow and act accordingly with the wise teachings of the Buddha and ancient sages.

3. Paying Homage to Those Worthy of Homage

With this blessing, we become intelligent and wise and will do the right things. To those worthy of homage are; the triple gems—Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, parents, teachers, family members, relatives and people older than us or wise. Especially people have sīla, samādhi, and paññā. The results of homage, veneration, and respect are a long life, beauty, happiness, strength, and wisdom. Why should pay homage to people? We must think about the qualities and gratitude. The qualities of nobility, purity, etc. are sīla, samādhi and paññā (in Pāli is guṇa). Having and showing appreciation, respect, gratitude on these guṇa is paying homage to those worthy of homage.

Some people do not have guṇa but have gratitude on us. Paying homage should base on the metta—goodwill and good volition. Without it is not real homage. The person receiving the homage responds with good-will, kindness, and compassion. Therefore, both sides develop wholesome mental states. These energies spread to the surroundings. It has good weather and affects the crops, fruits, trees, and plants with the wholesome energy or element. The foods have nutrients, and by eating them, human beings have long life and health.

What are the results of homage to things which should not be revered? It can be mentioned a lot of them. The outcomes are always negative, harmful, and dangerous. The obvious ones are some religious cult leaders, their cult teachings, and cult followers admiring to some political figures, artists, etc. who do not have moral standards. All these come from ignorance or delusions.

Therefore, we should not pay homage to unwholesome or negative dhammas. Instead should pay homage to wholesome or positive dhamma, such as sīla, samādhi, and paññā. The highest homage and veneration are the Buddha, Dhamma, and Ariya Saṅgha. They represent sīla, samādhi and paññā. There was a Jātaka story on wrong homage (veneration).

In one of his past lives, the Bodhisatta was born into a noble Brahmin family, who were worshipping fire. His parents kindled a fire for him after he was born and looked after for it until the 16 years of age. At this age, a brahmin youth could choose one of the two ways in his later life. Had a family or continued to worship the fire. He chose the 2nd one and brought the fire with him to the forest and continued the duty. One day he received a cow by begging. He wanted to offer the meat to the fire but had not salt with him.

Therefore, he left it at the forest and looking for salt elsewhere. A group of hunters arrived there when he was away. They killed the cow and took all the meat with them. He only found the head, the skin and the tail of the cow after he came back. He came to his common sense; how a fire could protect me even it could not protect its offerings. Therefore, he gave up the wrong practice, lived a hermit life, and practiced jhānas. After he died and born in heaven.

Some brahmins believed that by worshipping fire and after dying born as brahma gods. Once, a dying brahmin seeing the hellfire, told people what he had seen. They told him that this was the Brahma Heaven and asked to incline his mind towards it. After died and he was born in hell. There are many wrong views and practices in the world. People must have the courage to give up all of them as soon as they know it. It was like the Bodhisatta in this story.

After knowing the useless, unbenefited, harmful consequences of views and practices, we should give up instantly, such as terrorism in the name of religion. What is the best offering and veneration or homage?

The Buddha mentioned two kinds of veneration: āmisa pūja and Dhamma pūja; āmisa pūja—offerings of external objects such as the four requisites, etc. The second is Dhamma pūja—offering with Dhamma, i.e., practicing Dhamma or Dhammānu-dhammappaṭipatti—practise in accordance with the Dhamma. At the time of the Buddha's total unbinding—mahā-parinibbāna, the heavenly beings were paying homage and offering of heavenly flowers, sandalwood powder, music, etc. The Buddha said that in all of the offerings, Dhamma pūja was the best.

The Buddha taught the Maṅgala Sutta ten verses in groups. The first group of verses, as explained above, had three blessings:

1. not consorting with fools
2. consorting with the wise
3. paying homage to those worthy of homage.

These are very important to fulfill the other blessings to follow. It can be said fundamentally important. They are connected if we analyze these three blessings. Therefore, we know the skills and wisdom of the Buddha in teachings which were very systematic; hence he was called the teacher of gods and humans.

Only we are consorting with the wise and their teachings by practising them, we will become wise people. And then include in those worthy of homage. The most

important point about paying homage is we should not take refuge, worship and veneration to those three unwholesome roots of greed, hatred and delusion. By doing so, we will become rats and cockroaches and disgusted by all. It seems to be people are inclining towards that direction (sec. all the human problems around the world, pollution and global warming).

4. Residing in a Suitable Place

To reside in a suitable locality or good places.

Scholars translate paṭirūpa-desa as civilized land or suitable place. How do we decide a land or place as civilized or suitable? There can be two major groups existed on this subject. These are: the worldling and noble beings. Worldling is called because of being full of defilement (kilesa). Therefore, this worldling group is more extensive or variegated according to their views, characters, habits, etc. Majority of worldlings will decide a suitable place as where a lot of material progress and conveniences. These increase their defilement like a super-glue. So, a lot of competitions and indulgence in sensual pleasures are going on and on, always in the state of discontentment. Therefore, some world super-powers created a lot of problems around the world to increase their powers and wealth. It created instability in many countries. But they themselves are also not happy if we observe their society problems. There are a lot of unwholesomeness going on. They forget or do not know the basic point for happiness, peace and welfare. This is mental well-being. Material progress can be detrimental without basic mental well-beings. In the same way, we cannot success in reducing the global warming without solving the internal cause (the mind) if only dealing with the outer problems; even we can success, it does not last long.

For noble beings, sages and the wise, the suitable place is for mental well-being where we can develop our sīla, samādhi and paññā. It does not mean that the Buddha had neglected of material well-being. By studying the Pāli Texts, we know that the Buddha taught nearly everything which had connection with human beings. Therefore, material well-being is subordinate to mental well-beings. We can know this point very clear by observing today world situations.

The Buddha mentioned the importance of locality or places for the development and progress in worldly and spiritual matters. What are the things to choose for a suitable locality? We should consider on education, economy, health, spiritual, etc. We will have no progress for our whole life if living at wherever we are in. It is the best place to reside where there is the chance to realize the path and fruit of the Buddha dhamma; a place where we can fulfill the perfection (pāramīs) of the Buddha's teachings.

We should reside in countries where there is the Buddha sāsana. In general, a place where can support us for making merits; obtain wealth, education, and health. We can also distinguish a place with three periods of human life span: when young a suitable

place for education, during the middle period for wealth and the last period for spiritual progress.

There are six unsurpassed things—anuttariya dhamma. A place where we can fulfill these six noble dhammas is a blessing place. We must live in a suitable and good place to obtain them.

The six noble dhammas are:

1. the unsurpassed sight
2. the unsurpassed hearing
3. the unsurpassed gain
4. the unsurpassed training
5. the unsurpassed service
6. the unsurpassed recollection.

The unsurpassed sight is seeing the Buddha and Saṅgha. The unsurpassed gain is faith—saddhā; having faith in the triple gems (Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha) and the law of kamma.

For ordinary worldly people, there are a lot of sights, hearing, and gains for worldly matters which will never end. Some are quite harmful and polluting our hearts. To get the unsurpassed training is sīla, samādhi, and paññā. The unsurpassed service is serving the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, and to the parents. Serving the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha is very important for every Buddhist. Mostly we do not become aware or not knowing it profoundly. This is a very rare chance and opportunity. Why?

Because only a Buddha appeared that the triple gems came to existence. Even a Buddha appeared living beings must have had human births and also encountered them. Having a human birth is even quite difficult. In the whole of saṃsāra, we were slaves of our bodies and family members only.

Ledi Sayadaw was always looking for chances to serve the saṅgha. But the saṅgha stopped him from doing the services for them. What he had said or responded to them was very remarkable. He said; in the whole of saṃsāra, his hands were like the slave for the wives and children only. Therefore, he requested them to allow him for serving them. It is true; if we were doing a lot of services for the Triple Gems in saṃsāra and would not be here anymore.

Now, Buddhists should not miss this chance and opportunity. It is very rare to come by. Looking after the parents is also very important in human society. The Chinese

filial piety—shao tao is very well known. This education and practices were handed down for many centuries, maybe more than over 5,000 years. Without love, kindness, and filial piety to one's parents, there is no future for someone.

The unsurpassed recollection is the qualities of Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha-Guṇas. There are a lot of worldly recollections to ordinary worldlings. It is good to have the recollection of one's parent kindness, love, and gratitude. And then, repay to them.

(Someone who can fulfill the six unsurpassed things has the seven benefits as mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: purification of beings, surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, the disappearance of dukkha and discontent, acquiring the true method and realization of Nibbāna)

There was a good story of a sutta representing the anuttariya dhamma. One time the Buddha was going for alms-round and met a group of people. He asked their names and livelihoods. One of them was the fisherman, and his name was Ariya—Mr. Noble. But his actions were ignoble. So the Buddha gave him talk on what was noble, and at the end, he entered the stream (became a sotāpanna). From an ignoble person and became a noble person (ariya). This was also he was living in a suitable place for his spiritual progress. (i.e., a place had the chance to meet the Buddha and listened to his talk).

Here also we can see the inconceivable of the function of kamma. Even though Mr. Ariya had the potentiality of enlightenment his past kamma sent him to the family of wrong livelihood—taking other lives. So saṃsāra is not a Heaven for some Buddhists who want to come and go.

Even if it is a suitable place for most people if someone is very bad and does not make any difference to this person (as, e.g., Devadatta and his followers), even can commit unwholesome actions. So it depends on each person. Therefore, wholesome education is very important. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha taught about the eight unsuitable places and states or situations—Akkhaṇa Sutta (AN.8.29/ 9. Akkhaṇasuttaṃ).

These are: ① hells, ② animals, ③ ghosts-realms; ④ Brahma gods with only mind and only physical body; ⑤ a man or woman with unwholesome roots; ⑥ areas or countries the Buddha Dhamma cannot reach; ⑦ people have wrong views and ⑧ the time when no Buddha arose.

5. Having Made Merit in the Past

Having made merits in the past is a very important topic for every human being. To appreciate it we need to have faith in the law of kamma. True faith comes from the right understanding of kamma. There are a lot of differences among human beings because of their actions (kamma). Here the kammās mean the past and present lives actions. Why are there very few people having the well to do and fortunate life style in every aspect of life? Because very few people interest in and do wholesome merits of different kind. Also untrained mind usually takes pleasure in unwholesomeness. Therefore, the actions of human being are usually not very good. For this reason, the Buddha warned humans that the woeful planes were the permanent homes of living beings. Among the 31 planes of existence, human plane is the best place with chances for cultivating of all the goodness for well-being, from dāna, sīla, samādhi to paññā.

The third quality of the Buddha was vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno—perfected with knowledge and conduct. Here caraṇa—conduct has connection with merits.

There are fifteen conducts, and they could be classified into six groups. The fifth group is called seven noble treasures. These are: Faith, virtue, shame of wrong doing, fear of wrong doing, listening (studying) of Dhamma, generosity and wisdom. Everyone who can develop these seven noble treasures becomes a true Buddhist. Both knowledge and conduct are included in these seven noble treasures. For a noble being (an ariyan), these treasures become his own properties. For a worldlyling these treasures are very important for him to develop and perfect it. Wandering on in saṃsāra without them is quite painful indeed. These dhammas send beings to good rebirth and become wise. Merit bases on faith, whereas knowledge on wisdom. People who want to transcend dukkha need to develop both vijjā and caraṇa. Lacking of caraṇa is difficult to encounter the Buddha and Dhamma, and to have good rebirths. One cannot transcend dukkha even encounter the Buddha and Dhamma if lacking of vijjā (There are many evidences for both kinds of those persons in the suttas).

Sayadaw Dr. Nandamalabhivamsa gave an interesting talk called “With complete causes come perfection”. This talk had connection with our present discussion—having made merits in the past. I will mention a gist here because it is worthy for contemplation. In doing wholesomeness (goodness, merits, etc., refer to kusala dhamma), we must do with it completely, such as dāna, sīla, samatha, bhāvanā, etc. We have to start it from easy to difficult; as an example, the first one Dāna (giving) in the ten perfections (pāramitās). There are three stages for Dāna, from easy to difficult; such as giving foods, drinks, clothes and shelters to refugees; donate one’s

bodily part to save live (e.g., kidney) and sacrifice one's own life to save others, etc. Someone who wants to get all the goodness has to do all the good things (Sayadaw talked about the ten pāramīs with the three stages for each one roughly. We can study them in the Jātaka Stories. There were many profound dhamma and teachings. Give an example, the Mahā Nārada Jātaka includes law of kamma, wrong views, the fools and the wise, etc.). After the completion of his ten perfections (i.e., from Sumedha hermit to Siddhattha Gotama), Siddhattha became a Buddha. He possessed all the goodness nobody had because he had done all the goodness.

The following story tells us what goodness means. There were two monks in the time of the Buddha Kassapa (before Buddha Gotama). The first monk had generosity (cāga) and he always shared his foods and other things with others, which came from alms round or donated by laypeople. The second monk only interested in practice and not cultivated other merits which he took as unnecessary. After both of them died, they took rebirths in heaven. In heaven their standards of life were quite different. The first devata (deity) had longer life, the body light was brighter and shining, had more wealth, strength, power and intelligence than the second deity (i.e., the second monk) because of his past merits. Therefore, the second deity had more inferior standard than the other. After both of them passed away from heaven, they took rebirths in human world (Here it seemed the second deity died first and took some rebirths elsewhere before the death of the first deity. The reason behind it was the first had longer life span than the second).

The first deity was born to a young consort of King Pasenadi Kosala, but the second deity was born to a maid who looked after the baby prince because of their past kammic link. They were born at the same day. The baby prince was in a golden cradle and the maid lay her baby son on the floor. The small prince remembered their past lives when he saw the poor baby. So, the prince spoke to his friend "Dear friend, you are falling into this situation because you had not listened to my exhortation before". Then his small friend retorted as "Yes, I didn't listen to you and so what!" The prince answered "We're now in a such different standard." The friend replied "Your golden cradle is made from the four elements and my floor is also the same." Their conversation was heard by the princess Sumanā rājakumārī who just came to see her little half-brother. She was quite surprised and went to see the Buddha to ask the question of the differences between someone having dāna (merits) and someone without it. (Sayadaw stopped the story here.) This strange story testified the importance of knowledge and conduct (vijjā and caraṇa).

There are two suttas in the Aṅguttara Nikāya connection with the importance of merit: Kula Sutta (Families, AN.5.199 Kulasuttaṃ, PTS: A iii 24③ and Devata Sutta (Deities). These two suttas have connection and mention about the same things from different angle.

In Kula Sutta the Buddha talked to the monks as followed:

- ① Monk or monks visited to a family and if the families received with joy and gladness, they would born in heaven.
- ② Giving the monks seats and paying respect would become an upper-class person.
- ③ Wanting to offer the monks requisites would become an influenced person.
- ④ Performing the offerings would increase fortune.
- ⑤ Listening to Dhamma and asking questions would become a wise and intelligent person.

All these points remind human beings the importance of perfection coming from good causes (again see the Buddha's perfection connected with the ten pāramitās). Someone who has the merits of no. ① to no. ④ but lacking of no. ⑤ can be called a fortunate fool because he will think and act blindly. Someone who is wealthy but not intelligent and wise will probably become poor again. There was a politician who was wealthy billionaire but not intelligent and wise in U.S. A. He misused his power and influence which harm people because of lacking wisdom and intelligence. Wealthy and powerful people can create a better world and society if they know how to use their wealth and power properly and wisely.

Therefore, how to use power and money is more important than how to get it. The situations around the world today are mostly connected with these influential people.

The Buddha mentioned that there were no merits (kusala) which one should not do but only one should not do demerits (akusala) in the Āthana Sutta (??).

In the Devatas Sutta (AN. 9.19 Devatāsuttaṃ), a number of deities came to see the Buddha, telling about their past merits and the present situations. The first group of deities said that in the past as human and monks approached them. They rose up for them but not paid homage to them.

Lacking of the other merits, they were reborn as inferior class to compared to others. The second group—they rose up and paid homage but not offered seats. So they became inferior class if compared to others. The 3rd group—they did ① and ② but

not offered things to the monks. ④ they shared things (offered) to the monks but not listened the Dhamma (here requested for Dhamma). ⑤ listened Dhamma but not with eager ears ⑥ listened with eager ears but not retained the Dhamma in minds. ⑦ retained the Dhamma in minds but not contemplated the meanings ⑧ contemplated the meanings but not put into practice ⑨ put the Dhamma into practice so that these last group of deities free from regret and remorse. The Buddha mentioned the whole episode to the monks and exhorted them to do all things which should be done, otherwise they would regret like those deities.

The blessing of merits done in the past is very important for human beings because it was like planting a tree. From a tree we have a lot of benefits such as clean air (one way to deal with present global warming), good weather, give shade, fruits, flowers, for constructions, etc., in the same way merits done in the past and present will bring us good rebirths, good fortunes, welfare and protections. Everyone can stop the unwholesome for arising with a lot of wholesome karmas because wholesome and unwholesome karmas are following him as energies waiting for chances to give results.

Deities have more appreciation and understanding of merits than human beings. In heavens their enjoyment in sensual pleasure and other benefits are totally depending on their past merits because they do not have the chances to perform merits in heavens. Even king of heaven, Sakka had to come down to earth for making merit. Human beings (mostly) do not have any power or knowledge to know their past merits, instead they use their intelligence and effort (*nāṇa* and *virīya*) to achieve what they want and need.

When deities are near death they want to take rebirth in human world for cultivation of merit and return back to heaven because human world is the best place for it and not because they like the place. (they disgust the smell of human's.)

Someone is intelligent and wise, also encountering with good things and suitable situations, etc. because he or she had made merits in past lives. People had many wholesome merits in their past lives, mostly had success whatever kind of endeavor they were in. In the Buddha time, the billionaire Jotika was a very good example. In modern-day, the Hong Kong business tycoon Mr. Li is also a very good evidence. He came from Mainland China into Hong Kong and met a Feng Sui master.

He asked him about his future. He predicted that Mr. Li would make a lot of money, and also whatever business he did he would succeed. These became true later. With the success of his business, he always donates a lot of money. Therefore, he is a well-known philanthropist. How to use money is more important than to make money.

Most people, instead of using the money in better ways, just waste them; and even sometimes using them in unwholesome ways.

Do we believe in the law of Kamma? Just think about it. Two persons, even they have the same effort the results are different. These differences are connecting with their past karmas. And the old saying was; “Even though intelligent without past merits, it is always poor.” Sometimes we may meet an intelligent person, but whatever he tries to do something he does not get the result. This is the cause of lacking good conducts (*caraṇa*). The law of kamma is profound and complex. Most people know about it superficially. Even the Buddha mentioned it as one of the inconceivable subjects.

There was an interesting Jātaka story on this point (Jāt. 284 Siri Jātaka). A woodcutter went into a forest for fire woods. He came back late, and the city gate was closed. He had to sleep outside the city. The place he slept was near a tree, and two wild cocks also slept on the branches of that tree. At night some noises made him woke up. The cocks were in a quarrel because the cock on the upper branch shat on the cock at the lower branch.

The lower cock said to the upper cock with conceit: “Anybody who roasts my flesh and eats will get one thousand coins.” The upper cock retorted as: “Anybody who eats my inner organs will become a king; if he eats my flesh, he will become a field marshal or chief queen, according as he's man or woman; if he eats the flesh sticking to the bones, he will become the king's Treasurer, if he be a householder; or, if a holy man, will become the king's favourite!”

The woodcutter killed the upper cock, took it at home and asked his wife to cook for him. After finished, he put it in a basket and both of them brought it to the Ganges River. They planned to eat it after bathing. Suddenly a strong wind came and blew away the basket into the river. The basket was floating down the river and arriving at a place where the king's elephant trainer bathed the elephants.

He wanted to share the food with his wife and brought it back home. At the same time, his teacher, the hermit knew everything with his psychic power. He waited for him at his home and arranged for them. The hermit asked the elephant trainer to eat the inner organs, to the wife the flesh and for himself the other. He predicted him as would become the king after three days. By that time, another king came and made war with this country.

Without any other reason, the king put the elephant trainer like a king on the elephant to fight the war. The real king died in the war. But the elephant trainer was a good

planner and leading the battle with success and became a king. We do not know our past karmas. Therefore, to have merits for the future, in this life, we should develop wholesome or good karmas. Another important point on kamma is wholesome, and unwholesome kammic results (or energies) are following us all the times.

Therefore, it is very important to have wholesome thoughts and actions in every moment. Negative and positive results are looking for chances to come in at any time. Once we understand the benefits or values of merits (meritorious deeds), we will want to do it. Only then we will have the 5th blessing. Also, we should very often reflect on the result of the merit. The merits we should perform are: giving (dāna), precepts (sīla), with care to look after our speech, look after our sense faculties, etc. (dāna, sīla, samādhi and paññā).

This is like buried golds, gems, and treasures in the ground. No-one can take away from you and become your properties. It will follow behind us all the time like a shadow. The Buddha gave a dhamma talk on the four treasure pots—Nidhidāna Sutta. It was about dāna, sīla, samādhi, and paññā.

The results of these merits are:

- (1) fair complexion
- (2) pleasant voice
- (3) having a good bodily structure
- (4) good looking face
- (5) having power and influence
- (6) with many companions and servants
- (7) having the human happiness
- (8) having the celestial happiness
- (9) can realize Nibbāna.

All these wholesome Dhammas were praised by the wise and noble person. It could lead to becoming great disciples, chief disciples, Solitary-Buddha (Pacceka-buddha) and Sammā-sambuddha. Therefore, we must perform merits for this life and future lives to come. We should do it better and better.

6. Directing Oneself Rightly

It did not mentioned much about “Directing oneself rightly” in the commentary. It mentioned only saddha, sīla and cāga (faith, virtue and generosity) there. It only suggested that someone who had been immoral should establish himself in virtuous behaviors and miserly in generosity due to lacking for faith (on the Triple Treasures—Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha; most importantly the law of Kamma) should establish himself at last in faith. This blessing seems the most important one because it related to every human on the earth now. Whatever kamma of one’s past lives may be we cannot change them anymore. We are starting our many good kammās now in this life and they will effect our future lives to come in saṃsāra. So this blessing is visible to everyone now. It totally can change one’s present life and future to come (For this point and its evidence, we can know from the lives of some well-known monks and lay disciples of the Buddha in suttas).

A set of Dhammas leading towards a noble growth was mentioned by the Buddha to the monks. It was in the Book Five of Aṅguttara Nikāya recorded as “Growth Discourse” ([Wealth](#) Discourse AN.5.47 Dhanasuttaṃ). It seemed to relate to the blessing now we are discussion. The following five factors which a male or a female disciple practiced would lead to a noble growth. These were: ① Faith ② Virtue ③ Learning (listening and studying Dhamma) ④ Generosity ⑤ Wisdom. (Saddha, Sīla, Suta, Cāga and Paññā).

There was also a set of Dhamma called Seven Noble treasures, by adding two factors to the five factors above; and the other two are: shame and fear of wrong doing. These two are the guardians of the world and urgently needed for today humans. The Buddha said someone (a disciple) growing in these five ways absorbed the essence and the best of this present life. This person would become a superior man. These five factors can be included in the three trainings of Sīla, Samādhi and Paññā. Some Chinese Buddhists take the three Buddhist trainings as equal to the Chinese sages’ teaching such as Taoism and Confucianism. Even they misrepresent the Buddha equal to them and the founders of other great religion. They represent the Arahant ideal lower than these sages. Therefore, there are a lot of Chinese Buddhists who still do not clear about the qualities of Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. Buddhists might misinterpret the Buddha’s words without the study and knowledge of the Pāli Nikāyas.

To start something in the right direction, we need knowledge about them. Therefore, learning and studying or education is important. We can have right views and thoughts (thinking) and following right actions with the right or wholesome education. It will get the good results or wholesome results with right actions. Only possessing the knowledge of the Buddha Dhamma can have interest or trust (faith) to try it. The five ways or factors of noble growth was arranged systematically and all the Buddha, Dhamma were in this way. According to the Buddha whoever was possessing with these five noble growth could fulfill his wish (chanda) which was not by prayers.

For setting up oneself in the right course; develop faith (saddhā) and makes it strong if someone does not have it; follow the sīla—morality and practice it if no precept, etc. Atta-sammā-paṇidhi is let the mind in the wholesome and good direction. Therefore, speech and actions also include. Tha-pye-kan Sayadaw took it as a very important blessing.

In the Dhammapada, the Buddha taught us that the unwholesome mind brought sufferings, and the wholesome mind brought happiness. Unwholesome mind brings more sufferings to oneself than one's enemies. The wholesome mind brings happiness to oneself, which others cannot give. A negative mind is an untrained mind and without protection. If we look at the world situations, a lot of social problems, natural disasters, and other sufferings come from this mind.

For directing oneself rightly, Sayadaw told us to follow the instructions and practice accordingly to the Ambalatthikā-rāhulovada Sutta in the Majjhima Nikāya. The gist of the instruction and practice is: Before our mental, verbal, and bodily actions, firstly we must reflect that it has the benefit to oneself and others or not harmful to oneself and others. It also has reflected in this way during the actions and after the actions.

It has three stages. We should admit it if we do something wrong. And then decide not to do it again. It will bring happiness if the actions are good and right, and we should take joy in it. This instruction was the Buddha given to his seven years old son, novice Rāhula. It is good to train or educate our children with this sutta.

There was another sutta in the Aṅguttara Nikāya called Cakka Sutta—The Wheels (AN.4.31 Cakkasuttaṃ).

There are four wheels:

- (1) residing in a suitable place
- (2) associating with people of Integrity (wise and noble)
- (3) rightly directing oneself
- (4) having done merit in the past.

They are mutually conditioning and supporting each other. Therefore, these are like wheels. Human beings will achieve greatness (status, honor, etc.), abundance in terms of wealth and happiness if they are endowed with them. Most Buddhists have the chances and opportunity to develop them because more or less we have it. Only we do not know the suttas or educate with the suttas that not doing it rightly or properly. Instead, we waste our times with worthless worldly matters. We can illustrate the importance of the four wheels with two well known characters of the Buddha's disciples, Devadatta and Aṅgulimāla. Both of their lives give us food for thought on Dhamma if we contemplate it. First, let us contemplate on Devadatta. Among the four wheels he was lacking in the no. ③ wheel of rightly directing oneself which is the most important one of the four wheels and relates to the present actions (Kammas). This 3rd wheel also leads to the other three. Someone can change his life towards better life by combining with intelligence (knowledge) and effort even his past action was not very good, as an example, the 16th president of United States of American, Abraham Lincoln.

Devadatta was born into the privileged upper class at the time of spiritual development where a Buddha would soon appear. He was also a cousin and brother-in-law of the Buddha who also his spiritual teacher. He was one of the perfect persons conducive for enlightenment. But he directed himself wrongly to commit heavy Kammas because of his evil thoughts and hunger for power and ended up in the great hell.

Aṅgulimāla's given name was Ahiṃsaka (Harmless one) and he was the son of the Brahmin who was the chaplain to King Pasenadi of Kosala. Ahiṃsaka's life could be divided into three episodes for contemplation. In his first period as a young man, he was completed with the four wheels when he was studying at Takkaṣilā which seemed at nowadays Pakistan. He became his teacher's favorite, and his fellow students were jealous of him. So they make the story with malicious speech informing the teacher about Ahiṃsaka's affair with his wife. The unwise teacher believed them without any inquiry. Therefore, in order to ruin Ahiṃsaka, he commanded him to bring a thousand human right hands fingers for the honor. So he started to kill people and became a violent bandit.

At first, he did not keep the hand fingers properly so that most of them were destroyed. Later he put them all like a garland on his neck and became well known and frightened by all as Aṅgulimāla (garland of fingers). In his second episode of life as a bandit. He was wrongly directing himself that nearly ruined his whole life because he wanted to kill a woman whom he met and got the last finger he needed after he got 999 human hand fingers; and she was his mother, who was looking for him. This was a heavy evil Kamma and it surely would let him fall into the great hell.

The compassionate Buddha came in between them and saved his whole life. Later he became an arahant.

In the 3rd episode of his life, he became a monk and disciple of the Buddha and corrected his foolish way. This episode was rightly directing himself that not only not falling into the great hell but also ending all Dukkha. Here we can see the importance of a teacher. One's life is totally ruined with a wrong teacher (e.g., prince Ajātasattu). Here there are two important qualities: easy to instruct (suvaco) and compliance (sovacassatā) between teacher and student, or parents and children. Both Devadatta and Aṅgulimāla were conducted wrongly in the wrong direction. But only Aṅgulimāla had the qualities of easy to instruct and compliance that he was saved from danger and on the way to success.

If we want progress and happiness, we need these four conditioned cycles or wheels. In the past, if we had the 4th wheel and in this life, we have the chances of (1), (2), and (3) wheels. In this life, if we have (1), (2), and (3) wheels and will do the (4) again. Therefore, it is like a cycle and very important for every human being. By study and understanding the Buddha's teaching clearly, and we know how to use this life properly and wisely. Human beings are using their lives; foolishly that many problems and sufferings arise in societies.

Samāpatti (success) and Vipatti (failure)

In this section, I want to discuss more on kammās. Because it is universal and natural laws, no living beings can escape it or stay away from it. Also, it has a lot of connections with this section. Only we have the right, and good education knows how to live this life for oneself and others and create harmonious, peaceful, and happy societies. In the small booklet: Abhidhamma in Daily Life by Ven. Sayadaw Māhaghāṇḍayone was included a section on kamma.

Samāpatti (success) and vipatti (failure): complete with related causes and lacking with related causes. In living beings' minds, there are a lot of kammic result energies or powers latent in them. It always follows the living beings in their khandhas' processes if they do not have the chances to give the results. When the chances and causes are there, wholesome kammās give favorable results, and unwholesome kammās give the uncomfortable results.

The four successes (samāpatti):

1. Gati-samāpatti: having a good existence
2. Upadhi-samāpatti: having a good look and physical structure
3. Kala-samāpatti: living at the time of good periods
4. Payoga-samāpatti: the presence of mindfulness, intelligence and perseverance

The four failures (vipatti):

1. Gati-vipatti: having a bad existence
2. Upadhi-vipatti: having an ugly look and physical structure
3. Kala-vipatti: living at the time of chaos, with bad leaders and governments
4. Payoga—vipatti: lacking with mindfulness, intelligence and perseverance

Having a Good / Bad Existence

Having a good existence:

Human being, deity, and Brahma-god are good existences. When the beings are in these existences, their wholesome kammās have the chances to give the results. Even human world still has some sufferings; the other two are not. With the wholesome kammās have the chances to give the results that a person has the good sense objects as experiences.

Even he has some unwholesome kammās with him; these not have many chances to come in. Even though human existence is not free from sufferings, it is a lot better than the four woeful states (hell, animal, ghost, and tormented spirits of asura).

Therefore, more or less the wholesome kamma has the chance to come in and experience the good sense objects and stay away from the bad ones.

Having a bad existence:

The four woeful states are called gati-vipatti. The unwholesome kammās have the chances for the results when a being is born there. The beings in hells and ghost realms are always in dukkha, torturing and burning with sufferings. Even animals are a little better.

But they still have the chances of unwholesome kammās give the results of starvation,

thirst, and encounter with strong heat and rains. And kill with sticks and knives or eaten by others. The small insects are very easily killed by human beings with pesticides or stepping on them, etc. Even they have the past good karmas with them and none of it could save them.

Having a Good / Ugly Look and Physical Structure

Having a good look and physical structure:

Physical good look is important in the human world. A woman poor and low status but beautiful and attractive could reach to a higher status. Then her past good karma has the chance to give good results. For example, a woman had beauty became a queen, consort, etc.

Mrs. Simpson became the wife of King Edward because of having a good look. Do not talk about human; even beautiful and cute animals will be looked after by wealthy people. Their lives are even better than some human beings.

Having an ugly look and physical structure:

Someone has an ugly look, but with wealth and higher status. Still, he or she has difficulty in the same social class. This was evident in the Jātaka story of Prince Kusa and the beautiful woman Pabbavati. To conquer her heart, the Bodhisatta had to suffer a lot (the ugly Prince Kusa was one of the past lives of the Bodhisatta).

A beautiful woman with an ugly husband and others will take him as her servant. Once I met a businesswoman with fair complexion and a good look. Near her was a man with brown skin and ugly. He was managing her business with some workers. I took him as her worker. Later found out that he was her husband.

Living at the Time of a Good / Chaotic Period

Living at the time of good period:

At the time when countries are governed by good leaders and governments, these leaders and governments have skills, morals, good plannings, etc. for the welfare of the people and the countries, so human beings' good karmas can have the chances to experience good sense objects.

People are free from worries and difficulties. If we study ancient Chinese history, the Chou Dynasty periods were a very good example. It lasted for 800 years and the longest Dynasty in Chinese history. It was prosperous and long-lasting because the emperors and the citizens had moral integrity and virtues.

Why was that? Because they had the education on morality and virtue, starting from the young age, from the emperors to the citizens. They followed the teachings or educations of the sages and wise people handed down from generation to generation. People had these kinds of education in family life, schools, and societies.

By studying and researching Chinese written characters (i.e., Chinese letter or word) will find out the profound wisdom of the sages of the past. Human moral Integrity and virtues are like the root of a tree. If the root is rotten, then the tree will die and does not have the chance to bear fruits. Human mind and behavior not only affect societies greatly but also to the great nature.

Again if we study and research the Buddhist culture in some Theravadin countries such as Burma, etc. until the first half of the 20th century, Burmese were starting their education at a very young age at the village monasteries. Parents were also very close to the monasteries and the monks. Therefore, the whole family, more or less, knew the dhamma, especially in morality and virtues. They had been heard or read the Jātaka stories and the law of kamma. (including the Dhammapada stories). Most Buddhists and scholars overlook the Jātaka Stories and might take them as myths and fairy tales. These bodhisatta's stories of past lives were more realistic than the Greek mythology, Alice in Wonderland, Harry Potter's Stories, etc. It teaches us how to develop the ten perfections in three levels (basic, middle and higher) and become good-hearted, wise and noble human. It will lead us to noble growth and process the seven noble treasures.

The well-known International meditation teacher S. N. Goenka once mentioned the moral virtues of Burmese Buddhists in one of his essays in Vipassanā Journal. It mentioned about his grandfather, who was on a business Journey, forgetting his bag of money at the public rest place. He only knew about it after arriving at a weekend marketplace far away. He had no time to go back and get the bag of money; only after he finished his business and went back to get it. The money was still there waiting for him. Even his grandfather mentioned that someone lost a gold ring in the marketplace, no one would take it. This kind of moral integrity was very evident in villages. The farmers went to the fields for work or slept at night; they never closed their home doors and never lost their properties.

Buddhist texts mentioned three kinds of aeon; an interim aeon, an incalculable aeon, and a great aeon. Antarakappa—an interim aeon is from ten years to the maximum of many thousands of years. And they are then falling back to ten years. It is kala-samāpatti for the time when human lifespans are rising. The increasing of human lifespans is depending on moral integrity, virtues, weather, and foods. These were mentioned by the Buddha in the Cakkavatti Sutta (sutta No. 26, Dīgha Nikāya (DN.26 Cakkavattisuttaṃ)).

Now, our human lifespans are falling back towards ten years. Therefore, all human beings have to be very careful with our minds, speech and actions. For human survivals, peace and happiness, we all have the responsibilities.

Living at the time of chaotic periods:

There are the bad periods: evil, unqualified, immoral emperors, kings, and leaders governing the countries. The time is also kala-vipatti when countries are destroyed or in wars. All these things we can see in Africa, in the Middle East and other places. There are also other causes; some foreign superpowers interfere with purposes and made the problems greater and the situations are worsened (e.g., the Iraq war and the Syrian war).

With these kinds of period, the unwholesome karmas of human beings have the chances to come in. People are becoming poor and starving, with diseases and many other sufferings arise. At this time, people with good karmas even their karmas do not have the chances that they have to run for their lives and to hide. They cannot eat what they want and separate with their loved ones, etc.

Presence / Lacking of Mindfulness, Intelligence and Perseverance

Presence of mindfulness, intelligence and perseverance:

Sati, viriya, ñāṇa are payoga. Ñāṇa—knowledge is not only the good one but also includes knowledge with faults in the unwholesome matters. Therefore, in everything has mindfulness, perseverance, cleverness, heedfulness, etc. are payoga-samāpatti. In the Realms of celestial beings and Brahma-gods, this is not evident. But the results of this are very distinctive in the human world. There is very few strong unwholesome kamma with them to give the immediate results.

Therefore, other karmas are depending on one's payoga-samāpatti will give the results. In gist, to get good results, we should not depend on the past kamma only. We should also have to rely on this present payoga-samāpatti. This payoga is supporting for the past good kamma. For someone's success in business, the past good kamma includes 25% and the other 75% connected with this life sati, viriya, and ñāṇa.

The 16th United States President Abraham Lincoln was a very good example. Even though he was born into a very poor family, his present good qualities such as wise, intelligent, sympathy, and effort made him a great man. Man has this quality not only progress in worldly affairs but also Dhamma and he can develop the pāramīs for Nibbāna.

Payoga-samāpatti can prevent the unwholesome kammic results from arising. We can divide unwholesome, into two types strong and not strong, or big and small, or heavy and light. We cannot free from the strong, big, and heavy karmas with payoga-samāpatti but can reduce its power. For example, King Ajātasattu was sure to fall into the great hell by killing his father. But later he had remorse, had very strong faith in the Buddha and did other merits (all these were payoga-samāpatti) that only fell into a smaller hell. Therefore, the smaller unwholesome kamma can be prevented with it.

Present payoga-samāpatti can make one succeeds in business and has good health. In this way, payoga-samāpatti is the main point for the wholesome kamma to give the results. Someone has it can get an education, good spouse, good friends; can meet good teachers; can develop in education, prosper in wealth and status.

In payoga-samāpatti, knowledge of understanding things is the first important; then have awareness in matters and not to be lazy to make an effort and perseverance when matters arise.

Lacking of mindfulness, intelligence and perseverance:

Without knowledge and intelligence become foolish. No mindfulness, heedlessness, laziness, no effort, etc. are payoga-vipatti. Has envy and avarice on others, impatience, anger and conceit in matters, etc. all these are payoga-vipatti which disturb and hinder progress. The main point here is except the strong or heavy unwholesome or wholesome karmas. The small or light karmas of the past have the chances or not is depending on human payogas (payoga-samāpatti and vipatti).

If someone always has payoga-samāpatti then the unwholesome kammās do not have the chances and only the wholesome ones. (As a very good example, we should study the life of Yuan Liao Fan and his four lessons. He was a Ming Dynasty Buddhist and changed his destiny with payoga-samāpatti. For payoga-vipatti, the renegade monk Devadatta was a very good example.)

There are a lot of Dhammas which can be contemplated on concerning with payoga-samāpatti and vipatti (success and failure) because it is the subject of present kammās and situations. In the 31 realms of existence, human existence is the most important one. It is like an International Airport. From here, every human can go to any part of the world. Human beings or living beings created all sorts of kammās from here; to hells, ghosts, animals; back to human and all kinds of deity.

Even now we can see human hells, human ghosts, etc. on the Earth. Born as a human being and encounter the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha are priceless. Majority of human beings are wasting their priceless opportunities. Instead, they misuse their times with sensual pleasures and even doing meaningless and foolish things. Therefore, they create a lot of negative kammās on Earth.

Very few people have wealth and powers, but they misuse them and create more serious negative kamma (some world leaders, governments, and rich people). These are the greatest fools. Wise and intelligent people use their wealth and power for others. These are the wisest man and woman. Therefore, every Buddhist should create a lot of wholesome kammās, study and practice the Dhamma.

7. Broad Knowledge (Much Learning)

Bāhusacca means broad knowledge or much learning. The commentary referred it to as retention of the Buddha Dhamma. This was a blessing for someone who had accumulated and retained much of his teachings taught by the Buddha because this was the cause for abandoning unwholesome and developing the wholesome Dhammas which led to enlightenment. At the time of the Buddha his teachings were orally transmitted. Suta means what is heard or learning. Nowadays it can include book learning from internets, cell phones, etc., (be careful there are many polluted, poisonous, harmful stuffs there.)

It is also very important to contemplate on Suta (learning). Humans experience the world with the six sense-doors. Not all living beings are using of them, e.g., the Brahma Gods. They only use the eyes, ears and mind doors which are only necessary for them.

They use them to come and see the Buddha and his Disciples for listening the Dhamma. Only the immaterial jhanic gods and material Jhanic Gods without minds cannot use them (Brahma gods with only mind and with only body). How do human beings use their six sense-doors? Mostly they use for sensual pleasures and indulgence in them; using their mind doors with proliferation, imaginations, inventions for this purpose. What is about the animals? They are also the same even it may have limitations. Humans can be above animals only if we want to develop our minds above them. This is because we have the capacity and ability for it. How to do it? It is the wholesome and higher education of sīla, samādhi and paññā. By following the teachings or education of the Buddha and ancient sages, they will have the worldly and transcendental blessings; otherwise we humans can be worse than animals.

Usually we take education as learning for reading and writing from young age at primary school until graduate from university or an institute for a living or profession. Even we very rarely use the word education for changing the mind and character of criminals, drug addicts, etc., instead we use the word rehabilitation. In politics and religions we use the word brain washing (menticide) in the negative sense as exploiting and manipulating. In a broader and wider sense, education is about knowledge which can be right or wrong. The Buddha made a very clear differentiation between them. For most worldlings they follow their own desire without proper or right standards. The views of common people are changing with time and situations. Their views and thoughts depend on their understandings and maturity. Because these are influenced by different levels and types of defilement.

Natural laws are unchangeable; unwholesome dhammas are always unwholesome and wholesome dhammas are also the same. The sun always arises from the east and sets to the west. We cannot change the natural laws but only our minds. If the mind is not pure, then make it pure; not good, make it good. An untrained mind brings suffering, whereas a trained mind brings happiness. Therefore, broad knowledge or much learning is for the purpose of training the mind towards the right and wholesome directions, developing it higher and higher and at last transcend all sufferings. This highest goal and blessing can be fulfilled only by the Buddha Dhamma or education, and no other ways.

The Buddha did not reject the secular learning or worldly knowledge as a blessing, if it was blameless, leading to well-being and happiness in this life and future. Worldly knowledge are very extensive and many kinds. Some of them are harmful to human beings and even to environment and nature. Harmful knowledge is connected with ignorant and foolish people who use them out of greed and hatred or ill-will (e.g., arms industry). Some knowledge of sciences and technology which had been used with greed and delusion even had done a lot of harm to men and nature.

We can give a lot of examples for these negative effects in this 21st century, such as antibiotic, chemical weapons, nuclear arsenals, pollution of foods, air, water, earth, etc. There are no endings if we mention about them which most of us already know.

Why is that? it is not difficult to find the causes if we have the knowledge of the Buddha's education. Worldlings have a lot of defilement, therefore, they cannot see things and the future clearly. Out of greed, hatred and delusion, they do things unwisely and improperly. We should not always forget that in nature there are negative and positive forces. The law of the mind is also in this way.

These are unwholesome and wholesome mental states which control the living beings. The unwholesome roots are greed, hatred and delusion and the wholesome roots are non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion. For most of us, unwholesome things and its way are easily to be done and be followed it, it does not need effort because we are used to it. The wholesome things and way are difficult because it needs for learning and training to develop. Therefore, the Buddha's Education is compulsory to everyone; without it, we cannot solve human problems wisely and properly; on the contrary it is increasing them all the times.

Over half a century ago Mogok Sayadaw said as followed to his lay disciple: "Maung, Tun Tin, it is beneficial that we can record the sound with the development of science. It can lead us to Nibbāna if we know how to use it. Without using property, it'll send us into the Wok" (here the word 'wok' is the Cantonese language for large iron cauldron which we can see in the hell scenes). Sayadaw's saying was like a

prediction for his own teaching and the outcomes of science which is misused by human beings.

The knowledge of arts is also very important for human beings and the society. The arts refers to the creation or performance of drama, music, poetry, painting, literature, etc. It is also impossible for human culture and development without arts. We could misuse them by polluting people's minds and then bringing harms. We can also use it for educating people in the wholesome directions by developing their virtues, moral standards and becoming intelligent and wise. It totally depends on human views, thoughts and intentions. With wrong views, thoughts and intentions; the outcome will be bad. Nowadays many types of media are influencing human beings greatly, from small children to all sorts of age including old people. Most of them get lost in them like drug addicts. Their minds are never peaceful and are always in restless states.

It is very rarely to see and hear about moral issues in most of these media and mostly overwhelmed by sex, violent, sensual pleasures and meaningless chattering, etc. Without right and wise reflections and contemplation, we cannot see them clearly and will not correct ourselves. Then it will lead us towards moral or ethical degeneration and moral decadence. Now we can see and heard more and more moral decadence in societies than before, from the political leaders, governments to common people. Most of them are only thinking about power, wealth and fame. These kinds of situation already were predicated by the Buddha to King Pasenadi of Kosala for his 16 dreams. Most of them already happened in today world. (see the 16 dreams of King Pasenadi, Mahāsupina Jātaka, Jāt. 77; J. i 334-45).

Knowledge, learning and education are very important for mankind by which they excel on all other kinds of beings. All kinds of knowledge which can be right or wrong, inferior or noble, etc., are developing in this human world. This is also a place where all living beings have the chances to create all sorts of kamma.

Therefore, a perfectly enlightened Buddha always arose in this world, after perfected, his knowledge and conduct (vijjā and caraṇa). Who want to become an inferior person? This is the most crazy and foolish thing to do.

The Buddha continued to talk about broad knowledge as a blessing after on "directing oneself rightly". Therefore, without broad knowledge cannot directing oneself rightly. Broad knowledge is also vast learning. Here the most important knowledge is the Dhamma knowledge of the Buddha. This can come from study and research the Dhamma Discourses, listening to the talks of the scholar monks and practicing, monks, etc. listening of Dhamma is one of the seven noble treasures (the other six are: conviction, virtue, conscience, concern, generosity, and discernment).

Other groups of Dhamma for noble growth are conviction, virtue, learning, generosity, and discernment. Here also include learning (suta). Therefore, the Buddha emphasized learning as progress in worldly and spiritual matters. Paññā—knowledge as worldly has two kinds: arts and sciences which worldlings develop in many different ways. Some of them are harmful, and some are beneficial. There is no ending if we talk about them. The most important point for all worldly knowledge (i.e., arts and sciences) is that they should not be harmful and should always be beneficial to the human race and nature.

According to Ta-bye-kan Sayadaw; had broad knowledge was a skill in literature. It includes arts, sciences, and spiritual literature. We have to study, learn, research on broad knowledge which is useful, beneficial to oneself and others. Why are human and other living beings quite different from each other? Their three types of kamma are quite different, so their results are. The three types of kammic differences come from different views and knowledge. Human beings are creating kammās with their views and knowledge.

(This subject is very wide and profound and has a lot to say. This point also supports the importance of moral education and the law of kamma.)

Therefore, broad knowledge of the Buddha Dhamma is very important. Knowledge cannot steal by others like other things. It will never be used up by giving. The Buddha Dhamma is priceless. With practice, only broad knowledge and learning are useful and beneficial. If not, it becomes useless. A person has broad knowledge, but no moral value and virtues are without blessings.

For this point, there was a story in the Dhammapada on Tanhā Vagga—Chapter on craving. This was about Kapila, the fish. In the Buddha Kassapa's time, Kapila the monk was very learned in the Teachings. Because of his great learning, he gained fame and fortune. And then became very conceited and was full of contempt for other monks. When others pointed out his mistakes and he never accepted. In the course of time, all good monks shunned him, and only the bad ones gathered around him. He also disregarded the Monk Discipline and abused other monks. He was reborn in hell for these evil deeds. He became a golden fish with a stinking mouth during the Buddha Gotama's time (DhA iv, 37ff; for Dhp. 334~337; SnA ii, 305f; SA ii, 152).

By the Buddha; studying and learning for knowledge should have right intention and purpose. Using it also had to be right.

There are three kinds of study:

- (1) Studying for preservation, e.g., Ven. Ānanda.
- (2) Studying for transcending dukkha, i.e., study and practice.
- (3) The wrong study; it is like catching a poisonous snake in the wrong way, e.g., Kapila monk, Ariṭṭha monk (MN.22 Alagaddūpamasuttaṃ; Sv. 5, pācittiya 68, 1; Vin. IV, p131).

There are four ways people can increase in defilement (kilesa). These are:

- (1) With broad knowledge
- (2) With old age, increase in sensual pleasure with age
- (3) With fame, e.g., actors and actresses
- (4) With increasing in wealth,

This point (i.e., no. 4.) is quite clear. Most rich people do not know how to use them properly. Power-mongers of politicians want to become rich. Wealth-mongers of businessmen want power. They are supporting each other. Today some of the human problems and environmental problems were made by them.

The word (-monger) is added to nouns which denotes a person promoting or engaging in a particular activity, starting or encouraging trouble among others. Here I use it in a wider sense. It seems that present humans are in craziness. They are always in competitions and it can be called as the American syndrome. If Americans became monks, they would still be competing. A lot of competition is going on in politics, economics, sports, etc. There are trade wars between countries or among countries (e.g., China and U.S.). It comes from no appreciation for other success and related to envy, jealousy, selfishness, stinginess, ill-will, greediness, etc. The outcomes of these negative mental states and actions make people live in hostility, violence, rivalry, ill-will, with those who are hostile. (see DN 21 Sakkapañhasuttaṃ, Dīghanikāya.)

All these create unstable economy and harmful to other countries and its citizens. It is also the same in sports and sometimes it goes extreme that people lost their lives and severe injuries. All these worldly competitions become for power, wealth and fame which increase defilement. These are called inferior competitions which will develop human ego, pride, conceit. Therefore, there are two types of competition, wholesome and unwholesome. Increasing one's physical and mental well-being is wholesome, otherwise it is unwholesome. We can justify today human societies and environments as right or wrong competitions. It is wrong to increase defilement which brings dangers and disasters.

The Buddhist's way of competition is wholesome and decreasing defilement and leading to enlightenment and transcendence of dukkha. In the [Aṅguttaranikāya](#) Book V, there was a Sutta "Gavesī". Gavesī, who had 500 disciples was a lay follower of

the Buddha Kassapa. He and his followers were in struggle for spiritual competitions. They started from sīla level, later ordained as monks and all practised diligently and became arahants. These are so-called wholesome and noble competitions. (AN 5.180 Gavesīsuttaṃ)

Therefore, broad knowledge is not always good. It depends on what kinds of knowledge and how we use it. The Buddha's right knowledge (sammā-ñāṇa) is always overcoming our defilement, our real enemies-greed, hatred, and delusion, etc. and benefit to the human race and protect nature. Except that all are harming to the human race and nature is wrong knowledge (micchā-ñāṇa).

Why today is the human mind so polluted and harmful? The modern day human mind is a lot of influence by media, books, TV, internet, video games, movies, music, etc. There are a lot of stuffs connection with sex, violence, distraction, etc. which are unhealthy to the mind. If we do not use the six sense-doors (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind) mindfully, wisely, properly, then the sense objects-media are poison for our minds.

Most people think school educating as earning a living and professions are only educations. How to use the six sense doors is also educating, even we know it or not. All of our knowledge comes in from these sense doors. This is the most important and fundamental education. Every human being comes into this world; there are two ways to go, down-fall-downward way, and progress-upward way. A man without a moral foundation or morality and virtues, then his life is going downward. He will reap the negative results and no benefits for himself and others.

Progress-upward way is the opposite, with positive results and benefit for himself and others. No-one wants a bad, evil person, a criminal in one's own family, in society and a country. But everyone wants a good, wise, sagely and a noble person in one's family, etc. These need a wholesome education. The best sources can be from the Buddha's teachings and the teachings of the ancient Chinese sages and teachers. For the Buddha; it is unquestionable because he was the teacher of gods and humans. Ancient Chinese sages had a very long history of over 5000 years. It had rich experiences and systems.

8. Having Skills

The commentary did not mention much about Having skill or on crafts. It separated into two groups, for a layperson and a monk. It mentioned for a layperson as any trades did not cause harm to others and without unwholesomeness. For a monk there are not many things to do, but in a large community there are many things. He can give a hand depending in his skills (e.g., teaching Dhamma making robes, dyeing robes, repair buildings. Etc.) Having skill is also a big and wide subject which needs to talk and contemplate. It is also very important because it can have great effect on human beings and nature (human societies and mother Earth). It has connection to knowledge and educations. Human life styles and skills are variegated because of the broad knowledge. Wrong knowledge and skill make a man a bad and inferior person. Right knowledge and skill make a man a good and noble person. Therefore, knowledge and skill have great impact and effect in human societies and nature. So we should not treat it lightly and take it seriously with care.

Livelihoods are also based in skills. So people use their skills for making money. Most human livelihoods are blameless and some are not. Some livelihoods and skills are very bad and blameworthy that it can create a lot of harm and destruction to human beings; such as liquor, cigarettes, drugs, chemical weapon poison, nuclear arsenals, etc.

Nowadays the worshipping of money is so strong that most good livelihoods also become harmful to human beings. For making more and more money and in indulgence in sensual pleasures, for short termed benefits these people using all sorts of way to increase their wealth. In agriculture sectors they use pesticides and chemicals to poison the food chains and making the soils unusable in the future.

Politics itself is not dirty but the persons who play with it are. The essence of politics is for the well-being and welfare of the citizens and countries and in the wider sense forwards the whole world—i.e., global politics. A good leader or leaders and governments are very important for their own countries and towards the world. They are few privileged people who govern their countries and their own citizens.

If these people are selfish, corrupted and immoral, it is not only harmful to their citizens and countries but also strongly impact in nature. Immorality of human beings led to wars, famines, diseases and natural disasters of fire, heavy rains and typhoons to arise. All these were mentioned by the Buddha who knew these things very clear, and mentioned them in some suttas. Even nowadays we were seeing these things happened around the world (refer to the Discourse of Unrighteous by the Buddha, in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Book of the Fours, AN.4.70 Adhammikasuttaṃ).

It is very difficult to get good leader and government by votes because you do not know these people nature, characters and moral integrity. Good leaders will not fight and compete for power or craving and clinging to power. Nowadays there are more corrupted leaders and governments than before because of money and power politics which the Buddha already predicted before in the 16 dreams of King Pasenadi, Kosala (Mahāsupina Jātaka, Jāt. 77; J. i 334-45).

What about economics and world economy? There are a lot of competitions going on with money, business and trades. Out of jealousy and envy there are trade wars between and among countries. They are (the leaders and politicians) harming the citizens of other countries. There are also a very big gap between super rich and common or poor people. These millionaire and billionaire are very few and easily counted.

How do they use their wealth? Still there are a lot of poor countries in the world. Nowadays there are more natural disasters than before because of pollution.

Do they use their wealth to help these people and countries? Do they share their wealth with needy people and countries? So using money is more Important than making money. By only counting the money and at last buried by them and cannot get anything with them. Nowadays human economy is over production and over indulgence.

In the world there are still many people not enough to eat and have a proper life. But some rich and develop countries are just wasting them.

The most stupid and foolish thing human being can do is arms race between two western super-power. They developed and possessed a lot of weapons of mass destruction which will never bring peace and stability in the world. The money they spent in arms race are just wasting and no benefits for both sides. These money can be fed the whole world. The arms races and weapons of mass destruction are the outcomes of misusing politics, science and technology. Therefore, the knowledge and skills of worldlings are some good and some very bad that even can bring human beings to destruction.

The Buddhist monks' skills are always in the wholesome ways for maintaining the Buddha Dhamma and teaching (educate) lay people. These are study, practice and teaching. Skill in Dhamma is the best and the highest. It leads beings in the direction of well-being, harmony, peace, happiness and transcending of sufferings. The Buddha himself was the best example.

Some of the Buddha chief and great disciples were also had the skills in teaching Dhamma; e.g., Ven. Sāriputta, Ven. Puṇṇa-mantāniputta, Mahākaccāyana, Kumāra Kassapa, Ānanda, etc. The Buddha praised the Dhamma as the best (greater) gift, the best tast (rasa) and the best delight (rati)

Therefore, the best service to human beings is with the knowledge of learning and skill in Dhamma. Other worldly knowledge, learning and skill can be beneficial or may be detrimental consequences which we can see in societies, environments and nature.

One of the best contributions to human race is wholesome, moral education which better than any other worldly services. Because it can change people life from bad to good and then become better. The other things are only solving the problems in short terms and never cure the persons and problems involved.

By observing and contemplating today world affairs and situations we know very clear why many human problems and natural problems are never solve and even becoming worse. Without a proper education and most of us are worshipping the trinity Gods-greed, hatred and delusion, taking refuge in them and become their faithful followers. So all the problems arise.

The Pāli—sippa is handicrafts. The Burmese word sippan (It seemed to come from this Pāli word) is sciences. Therefore, it includes all worldly skills. It will be a very wide subject in today world. It is important for material progress and development. If harmful to humans and environments and become useless and no blessings. It must benefit to humans and nature. So any skill in arts and sciences (with technology) must support the happiness and welfare of human beings. If not, it will have detrimental consequences.

In the Khuddaka Nikāya, Peta Vatthu—ghost stories, there was an interesting story that supports this point. [DhA. ii, 71f; Pv. iv. 16; PvA. 283f (Peta-Vatthu Commentary, iv. 16: 282-286. Text: N ii. 68-73.)] In Bārāṇasī City, there was a man who had the skill of throwing stones. He could make many different types of picture by throwing stones on tree leaves. He made his living in this way. One day the king of Bārāṇasī came to this place and saw his skill. He invited this man to his palace. The king had a brahmin teacher who was very talkative. Therefore, he wanted to teach him a lesson. The king and the stone thrower arranged for it. He was hiding inside the curtain behind the king. The king summoned the brahmin teacher, and he was talking in non-stop.

So the stone thrower threw a pallet of goat shit as soon as the brahmin opened his mouth to talk. It went straight into his mouth every time he tried to speak. In this

way, the brahmin teacher corrected his talkativeness. The King gave 14 villages to the stone thrower as prize money. This man taught his skill to others. One of his servants learned this skill from him. After the man mastered it, he wanted to test his skill and went to the Ganges River.

A Pacceka-buddha named Sunetta was staying near the river. At that time he was in meditation. This foolish man out of delusion decided to test his skill on the Pacceka-buddha. He threw a stone at his right ear, and it went through and came out from the left ear. With the injury, the Pacceka-buddha passed away. When people knew what was happening and became very angry and killed this man. After he died and was born in hell. After he released from hell and at the time of Buddha Gotama he became a ghost near Rājagaha. Because of the result of his heavy kamma, this ghost's head was struck with many iron hammers at the same time.

After he fell to the ground and the hammers disappeared. As soon as he got up again, the hammers appeared and struck his head again. And in this way the ghost suffered continuously. The result and power of kamma were unthinkable. Therefore, anyone should not use his or her skills to harm people or nature, and the outcome of suffering is unthinkable.

Here skills mean all kinds of skill, including in politics, economics, any types of arts and sciences, and technologies, etc. If for power and money only, it is like licking the honey on the tip of the razor blade.

9. Well Mastered Disciplines

The commentary mentioned about well mastered disciplines for laypersons and ordained monks. The discipline of a layperson was abstaining from the ten unwholesome courses of action (kammās) and developing the ten wholesome courses of action. All these will be mentioned below. A person well trained with them is a blessing because he will not fall into defilement and be led to well-being and happiness in present life and future to come by following the excellent qualities of conduct. There are more courses in details and refinement for an ordained monk disciplines which are following the monastic rules and the fourfold purification of good behavior—such as: restraint according to the monastic rules, restraint of the sense faculties, purification of livelihood and reflection in the use of the four requisites (robes, foods, dwellings and medicines). These are the causes for achieving mundane and supra-mundane happiness.

The background story in the question of blessing was related to the discussion and argument among human beings. Later it, spread to the deities with including the Brahma Gods. This meant the human problems were also their problems which related. Therefore, all types of living beings are interconnected and interrelated. Even the Buddha mentioned this point in suttas. Because human world is like an international air-port for temporary transit. The deities were watching and observing humans on earth. They expect human beings doing wholesome acts and take rebirths in their realms. Therefore, the question of blessing is related to all living beings.

Even though the commentary distinguished the actions for a layperson and a monastic. It is intertwined. For a monk, it is more refined than a layperson. The spiritual process is developing from coarser levels to refined levels. Therefore, a layperson should not stop at coarser level (see the story of layman Gavesī and his 500 students in the blessing of broad knowledge (AN 5.180 Gavesīsuttaṃ)).

Pāli word vinaya is discipline and a broad subject covering every part of human society. There are rules, regulations, laws etc. Without them, governments cannot function or run properly. Societies and people from all kinds of life cannot live in harmony, peace and happiness. The progress and development of every human sector is depending in them. Without following it, human beings are out of control and everyone will do everything according to his or her own desire and selfishness, then countries and societies become in chaos. Human beings become rude, uncultured and irresponsible. We can see these things in today children and youth problems.

Mostly anti-government demonstrations were turned into violence, damaging of properties and loosing human lives. Violent nature are happening in many sectors of societies from family level to international level. All these unfortunate things are arisen by lacking of moral standard, moral values and moral disciplines. Therefore, there are something wrong in education systems of modern day. All these things we can learn on the old Chinese history from the many thousand years up to modern day.

Chou Dynasty was the longest one and lasted for over 800 years because of its moral standards and values which were the outcomes of moral education and moral disciplines. It had to be trained and followed by citizens from common people to princes and emperors. It started from family life educated by the teaching of Chinese ancient sages and wise men.

If we look at Mao Tse-tung's era during the time of Chinese cultural revolution the situations were opposite. Youths and children were indoctrinated with wrong teaching (education), views and thinking to try to destroy and demolish their old culture and civilization of many thousand years. They treated their parents and teachers like criminals; criticizing, cursing, beating and torturing their benefactors like slaves. They changed the Chinese characters or words of over many thousand year old into meaningless words. Chinese language and characters are wisdom language, it represents profound philosophy and natural law and wisdom in it. It becomes meaningless and dead language to change them into short forms.

For example, you take out the heart letter (hsing) from the original word for love (ike). And then the short form love becomes without heart. What it means love without the heart? [love without heart becomes lust.]

愛 (love) → 爰 (lust)

It may be represented for today human beings because there are many violence and cruelty going on to fellow humans, animals and nature. Is it love or lust? Love leads to compassion, peace and harmony. Lust leads to violence, cruelty and selfishness.

Let us contemplate some of the monastic disciplines for monks and see what a layperson can benefit from it. The monastic codes and rules are collected in the three volumes of book on disciplines. For a layperson, there are the ten unwholesome and ten wholesome courses of action. They teach people what should not to and what should be done and acted; with the basic training rules of the five precepts and adding three mental actions to it.

There were some rules about purification of livelihood for monks. This is also important for layperson. There are different ways and style of life between monk and

layman, so the things and matters of livelihood are also different. The basic rule is not harming others —humans and animals, and it also related to the five precepts which should not be done, for example, cheating in business, killing animals for foods, selling alcohols and drugs, etc. Another rules of training for monks are reflection in the use of the four requisites or the proper intentions. This is also important for a layperson to contemplate in their daily life whenever they use them. For a monk, the things necessary for him are very limited. Therefore, for a layperson the worldly things are numerous and increase their discontentment, craving and clinging is very great. With more discontent, craving and clinging, more sufferings come to be and vice versa.

The best way of contemplation is to relate to things (animate and inanimate) as elements, not-self and loathsome which the Thai monks and lay-Buddhist are using in chanting and reflection. It will develop our wisdom faulty and see things rightly and not get lost in them. As an example, we can use it on our own partners. Nowadays, humans are so caught on in sexual desire that increasing many sexual misconducts, such as unnatural sexual behaviors, unlawful sex, etc.

If we turn the body from inside to outside, everyone will disgust with it. The things coming out from the nine openings of the body are unpleasant to see and smelly. Discontentment, craving and clinging to things (animate and inanimate) create a lot of human problems and to nature. So the Buddha said sufferings came from craving (taṇhā and including ignorance—avijjā).

There are also quite a few minor rules on proper behaviors, dealing with foods, teaching Dhamma and miscellaneous. Elegance, graceful deportment are important for monks, which can have great effect on lay communities to let people who do not have faith in the triple gems (Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha) develop faith and who have it already will increase their faith. Monk or layperson who has graceful, placid, well-mannered demeanour win people heart. There was an interesting story about Sāriputta how he met his first teacher and became a Stream-winner (sotāpanna). He met Ven. Assaji at one morning, who was on alms-round. Assaji's deportment was graceful, placid and well-mannered that Sāriputta took him as someone had spiritual attainment. So he followed him and asked for a teaching and after hearing a few words, Sāriputta became a sotāpanna.

The Buddha himself was from a high class warrior family that it was no doubt he completed with good demeanour.

Vinaya is disciplined and not only Buddhist Monks should have it. All human societies must have it. Only following and practicing it that human beings can have progress and development. For understanding and practicing has to be begun in

family life and spreading into all parts of society. Starting from the family life have to teach and train the children. Laypeople disciplines are: to avoid the ten unwholesome courses of action; and to develop the ten wholesome courses of action.

The ten unwholesome courses of action:

- (1) Destruction of life
- (2) taking what belongs to others
- (3) sexual misconduct
- (4) lying
- (5) malicious speech
- (6) harsh language
- (7) frivolous talk
- (8) covetousness
- (9) ill-will
- (10) wrong view (Here not believe in the law of kamma)

[Note: Someone can ask, what about using intoxicants—i.e., drugs and alcohols? This is included in number (3)].

The ten wholesome courses of action:

- (1) To avoid the destruction of life and be anxious for the welfare of all lives.
- (2) To avoid taking what belongs to others.
- (3) To avoid sexual misconduct.
- (4) To avoid lying, knowingly speaking a lie for the sake of any advantage.
- (5) To avoid malicious speech, to unite the discordant, to encourage the united, and to utter speech that makes for harmony.
- (6) To avoid harsh language and speak gentle, courteous, and agreeable words.
- (7) To avoid frivolous talk; to speak at the right time, by facts, what is useful, moderate, and full of sense.
- (8) To be without covetousness.
- (9) To be free from ill-will, thinking: “May these beings are free from hatred and ill-will and will lead a happy life free from trouble.” etc.
- (10) To possess the right view, such as gifts and offerings are not fruitless, and there are results of wholesome and unwholesome actions. That is to believe in the cause and effect of the law of kamma.

When human beings are alive and living with three types of action (kamma); i.e., mental, verbal, and bodily actions; all are included in the ten unwholesome and ten wholesome actions. Therefore, these are very important. We have to follow the

disciplines if we want to live our lives free from the courses of ten unwholesome actions. The rules of law are also discipline.

So disciplines are a very wide range of subject. It includes worldly affairs to spiritual matters. Human degeneration and progress are connecting with disciplines. In the world, many problems and sufferings arise from humans without disciplines. Therefore, disciplines are fundamentally important. We can justify a nation and people by its standards of discipline.

Why people have no discipline? Because some people do not have the proper education on moral disciplines and how to become a human. They did not bring up or grow up with disciplines. Usually, we overlook or even do not know the importance of how to bring up children with discipline. So every type of goodness must be trained and developed at an early age.

Without proper education and training on disciplines and grew up with bad habits and behaviors. And then becomes an immoral person. It is like a white sheet of canvas and a piece of soft clay. You can draw any picture and put other colors on it. You can model with the soft clay into any image, but with the hard and dry clay, it cannot be. Nowadays, people never take care or seriousness on disciplines and train children. Instead, they let all sorts of media to teach and train their children.

Therefore, it at homes children are difficult to teach and at school so difficult to discipline them. There are also signs of disrespectful to parents and teachers by youngsters. If you look at the present-day human societies, you will see the signs of the decadence. When we were young, we never seen youngsters retorting to the parents and teachers when they taught them.

Nowadays we even heard the news of beating and killing them. We can get good children and citizens only by educating and training. We cannot let them go their ways without disciplines and moral standards of the period. Without these foundations, no family, society, and country will stable. We can justify this point with current situations around the world.

Nowadays, we heard a lot of very nice words on democracy, human right, equality, etc. Do we use them rightly and wisely? No, it is not. Mostly we use it as empty words and even create more problems and chaos.

Without disciplines and moral standards not only become empty words but also create instability, chaos, problems, and violence, etc. in family, society, and the country.

We can see all these things going on in this 21st century around the world. For example, a rich superpower can have a weapon of mass destruction, but another small country cannot have it or keep it. This country can interfere and invade a small country. But if another country does the same thing is unacceptable. There are promoting and protecting sexual misconduct. Another good example is the unwholesomeness of American gun law which leads to many deaths every year. Are these human rights? There are a lot have to say and contemplate on some of the modern-day philosophies.

The ways of correcting and the cure are not promoting and protecting unwholesome matters and also not by punishments. To educate and change people mind. Only with proper and right education can solve all these problems. Using these philosophies wrongly are not only create problems in politics, economics, media, etc. but it is also spreading into family life and schools. Therefore, nowadays, children and youngsters are cannot be taught, trained, and controlled them in the right directions. So these nice words are should only be used in good and wholesome matters.

It is the same as a nuclear power. You will help the human race in progress if you use it wisely. If you use it improperly and unwisely, it brings destruction to humans. It is also very important to take heed of someone's admonishing who has the knowledge, intelligence, wise and noble. (e.g., teachers and parents). There was a Jātaka story demonstrating this point. In one of his past lives, the Bodhisatta was a king. Later he had the sense of urgency (saṃvega) and renounced the world and became an ascetic.

Another king who was the past life of Ven. Ānanda heard this news and also became an ascetic. Later they met each other in the forest and stayed together. One day they went for alms round and took back their foods to the forest. Ānanda took out the salt bag which he has stored before and put it into his foods. The Bodhisatta saw it and admonished him. He said to him; “You have been renounced the kingship and the whole country. It's not proper and inappropriate for clinging to this salt. Ānanda retorted; “You also renounced your kingship and came here for practice. It's not good for you to admonish others.”

The Bodhisatta replied; “What I have reminded you is sensible. Therefore, I am not wrong.” Ānanda remarked again; “If you say something people don't like, then it is wrong.” At last, the Bodhisatta explained to him that he had to say something beneficial and appropriate. If not, it was like a blind wild buffalo moving around blindly in the thickest forest and encountered suffering. Then Ānanda became aware of his own mistake.

Therefore, it is very important to take heed of admonitions from parents and teachers

with eagerness, willingness, and compliance. Today in societies a lot of youngsters have problems in family life and schools is lacking in these qualities. Therefore, well-mastered discipline is a blessing and protection.

10. Well Spoken Words

The commentary explained the blessing of well spoken words (speech) with the Subhāsita Sutta (Well Spoken, SN. 8.5 Subhāsitasuttaṃ). Speech possessing well spoken had four factors which was described by the Buddha. These were: well spoken speech Dhamma, pleasant speech and true speech; the opposites were bad spoken. The commentary emphasized here well spoken speech as teaching the Dhamma to others. It seemed to be quite narrow view. The world today is not the very one anymore like over 2500 years ago, the time of the Buddha. Nowadays human mind is more defiled, the life style and societies are more complicated. To solve human problems we need to use any skillful means including worldly knowledge. Any ways, any speech, any dialogue, discussion and talks which solve the tension, leading to peace and harmony are well spoken.

Using Buddha Dhamma only is very limited because not all human beings are mature enough to understand and accept it. We should never forget that there are more fools than wise. Dialogue between inter-faiths is a good example to solve problems. We should not lean to any side and find the common ground which unite and harmonize religions and people. For every true religion, the basic common ground is not to do evil and to do good. Any religion, politics economics, culture, science and technology which is not based in these common ground is unsustainable and leading to problems, instability, disaster, destruction and sufferings. The human world will be in problems and chaos if man's common ground and standard are to do evil and not to do good. Now we are in this direction. Here I do not want to give many examples in the situations around the world today and most people already know and see it.

World leaders, politicians, political parties even use unwholesome speech to get elected, they are in competition for power and wealth. Leaders, governments and citizens are like the relationship between Parents and Children in a family. The children will not be good without good parents and a lot of problems will arise in family life.

Most people, including Buddhists who do not have the knowledge on the Buddha's teachings never take it serious and importance of speech and their results in this and future life to come. Therefore, I will retell one of the stories which happened in the time of the Buddha. By his true story we can know how and why speech is so important to all of us. This was the story of Kokālika monk.

We can find his story in Saṃyutta Nikāya, Aṅguttara Nikāya and Suttanipāta [SnA. ii. 473 (Sn. 3-10); AN. 10.89 Kokālikasuttaṃ (A. v. 171-4); also SN. 6.10 Kokālikasuttaṃ

(S. i. 149ff)]. He was the son of a financier and stayed in a monastery built by his father.

At the time, the Buddha was dwelling at Sāvatti. The two chief disciples Sāriputta and Mahā-Moggallāna with their 500 monks were wandering together in the countryside. Near the rain retreat Sāriputta and Mahā-Moggallāna separated with the other monks and both arrived at the city where Kokālika lived. They stayed the rain retreat there and asked Kokālika not to mention about them to the lay supporters. He agreed and after the rain retreat next early morning he went to the city and announced to the people that the two chief disciples were with him.

Therefore, the lay community brought many good things for the chief disciples as offering and placed it in front of Kokālika. He knew that the chief disciples were very frugal and would not accept the offerings obtained by suggestion. And then they would tell the people to give it to the resident monk. Kokālika informed this to the elders but Sāriputta and Mahā-Moggallāna did not accept them because they knew it was obtained by suggestive speech. They also did not tell the people to give it to the resident monk because it was not suitable for any monk for use. Without saying anything, they left the monastery. Kokālika was left behind alone with anger and had strong grudge against them.

After the rain retreat Sāriputta and Mahā-Moggallāna paid a visit to the Buddha. After that the chief disciples with 500 monks wandered on tour and returned back at the place where Kokālika was. The lay supporters recognized the elders and gave a big offerings to the monks. The chief disciples accepted them and gave it to the Saṅgha (because it was obtained in lawful way). Kokālika saw this and went to the elders and accused them of evil monks with evil desires making a false display of excellent qualities. He himself went to the Buddha and informed him that the elders had evil desires and had come under the control of evil desires. The Buddha exhorted him as saying the elders were virtuous and not saying in this way. But Kokālika's hatred was so strong to the elders that he did not listen to the Buddha and accused of Sāriputta and Mahā-Moggallāna in three times.

After he left the Buddha and out of his sight, Kokālika's body became covered with boils the size of mustard seeds. It grew into bigger and bigger, bursting open, exuding pus and blood. Kokālika died with this kammic illness and his resentment at Sāriputta and Mahā-Moggallāna and then reborn in the red-lotus hell.

The arahant bhikkhunī Ambapālī was a high class prostitute before. In her past life, she was also a bhikkhunī during the Buddha Kassapa's Sāsana. At that time she addressed an old arahant bhikkhunī as a prostitute and born as prostitutes for many lives until her last life as Ambapālī.

Mahā-Moggallāna was a farmer during the Buddha Kassapa's time. One day he was looking for his oxen in the forest and met a monk who was getting lost in the forest. So this monk asked him the way but he was in rush and impatient. Therefore, he made the remark to the monk as talkative and only slaves were like this; so the monk must be a slave. Because of this unwholesome speech, he later was born as a son to a slave woman and named him Bījaka and become a slave. (see the Mahā Nārada Jātaka, Jāt 544/6:252 f).

From this Mahā-Moggallāna's past life, we can justify the dangers and suffering of the rounds of existence. After the Buddha Kassapa Mahā-Moggallāna's pāramī (perfection) to become a chief disciple was quite mature because of the small unwholesome speech still born as a slave. At that time Ānanda was the princess Rujā and she could remember her past seven lives and seven future lives to come. Ānanda's 14 rebirths were worthy of contemplation and why the results of kamma was one of the four inconceivable as taught by the Buddha.

Ānanda's 14 past lives:

- ① The son of a goldsmith and committed a lot of sexual misconduct
- ② The son of a rich man in Kosambī and had a moral life style and making merits.
- ③ Fell into Rorūva Hell for his sexual misconduct as gold smith's son.
- ④ Born as animal—a strong male goat in Bheṇṇākata country. It was castrated (the result of sexual misconduct) and rode by children and pulling cart.
- ⑤ Born as a monkey in a forest. The leader monkey of the group castrated the small monkey by biting its testicle to prevent it becoming stronger as enemy.
- ⑥ Born as a strong bull in Dudassana country. Therefore, the owner castrated him and used as pulling cart.
- ⑦ Born as a human being in Vajjī country but did not has proper sex organ, neither man nor woman.
- ⑧ + ⑨ + ⑩ + ⑪ Born as four times as the consorts of King Sakka—the god-king.
- ⑫ Born as the consort of a common deity.
- ⑬ Born as princess Rujā (still not became a male being yet).
- ⑭ Born as a male deity in heaven.

Some Buddhists thought bodhisattas were enlightened beings and living in special Heavens with their transformation bodies coming and going with ease and helping living beings. The true stories in the Nikāyas were different. Even true bodhisatta was sometimes born in hell and became animals (see Prince Temiya Jātaka, before that life he was in hell for sometimes for his past kamma as king who ordered to execute criminals).

If we study and observe today media and communities, we can see a lot of people do not know how to use speech properly for oneself and others. Most of these speeches are frivolous, idle and silly talks and wasting time. Sometimes these useless talks are creating problems and sufferings and leading to arguments and fights. A layman whom I knew argued with someone in a tea-shop and could not control his anger and killed the man and ended up in jail. After a few years he came out from prison and this kind of thing happened again, but, this time he was killed by others.

Buddhists can be considered the best type of people who can use speech which transcends suffering. The Buddha himself was the best of the best among all with some of his monastics and lay disciples. I can give some examples of modern days Buddhists, Mogok Sayadawji and S. N. Goenkaji, etc. Mogok Sayadaw's Dhamma talks (Suññatā Dhamma) were sending many Buddhists on the way to Nibbāna until now. S. N. Goenkaji's Dhamma instructions and retreats also sent a lot of yogis on the way to Nibbāna. Therefore, in the Suttanipāta, Subhāsita Sutta, the arahant poet Ven. Vangīsa said as follow:

“The speech, the Awaken one (Buddha) speaks is leading to Nibbāna,
putting an end to Dukkha. This is the only surpassing and worthiest speech.”
(Sn 3.3; Sn. p. 78f. cf. S. 1.31; S. i. 188 Sabbhisuttaṃ)

This is a very, very important topic. Even most people not take it seriously and not think about it carefully. It is a very wide and profound subject and not a small thing. We use words and speech nearly all times. Thinking is also inner chattering. The speech also a connection with the ten unwholesome and ten wholesome dhammas (see on the topic of well-mastered disciplines). Therefore, we should abstain from speech connection with the ten unwholesome dhammas, and it should develop the kinds of speech connection with the ten wholesome dhammas. It is impossible without speech and cannot escape it from hearing.

There are four kinds of wrong speech and four kinds of right speech. The four kinds of wrong speech include in the ten unwholesome dhammas. These are lying, divisive speech, abusive speech, and idle chatter. The four kinds of right speech include in the ten wholesome dhammas. These are abstaining from the four wrong speeches:

speaking only true; to unite the discordant, to encourage the united and to utter speech that makes for harmony; speak gentle, courteous and agreeable words; to speak at the right time, in accordance with facts, what is useful, moderate and full of sense.

The four kinds of right speech included in the Noble Eightfold Path as right speech. Speech—good or bad has power. Therefore, we must take them seriously. The results of wrong or right speech will follow living beings in the round of existence even a Buddha could not escape from it.

The mouth is for speech and eating. Man needs to communicate with each other, so we use it all the times. If we are not deaf cannot escape from hearing. Therefore, man invented languages and letters. All our human civilization is depending on it.

Even though it is very important, we do not take it seriously. Therefore, we use it improperly, unwisely and harmful to oneself and others. Wholesome speech and skillful speech bring harmony, happiness, and peace, and even leading to the ending of dukkha. One of the factors for the realization of Dhamma is listening Dhamma. In the Chinese language, the explanation of the Chinese letter character mouth (口 = kho) is an opening where speech comes out, and foods go in. Whatever coming out and going in is very important for everyone.

We can create a lot of negative karmas and problems with it, and also can create a lot of positive karmas and benefit with it. It depends on how you use it. It could be harmful to oneself and others, and also could benefit for oneself and others. If we observe the world today, there are a lot of unwholesome things going on for the mouth. Polluted media and food poisonings are very harmful to the mind and physical body. Most media are talking about the development and promoting of greed, hatred, and delusion; using science and technology to poison food chains (chemicals, pesticides, etc.). Some politicians are using the wrong speech and nasty tricks to get elected. How can the citizens rely on these leaders and their governments?

In the Buddha's teachings, we can study and learn a lot on wrong speech and right speech. The Buddha was the most skillful person in using speech. We should learn from him. There is a lot for reflection and contemplation on this subject. I want to quote some of them here. In the Sutta Nipāta, the Buddha gave a discourse on Well Spoken Words (Subhāsita Sutta, [Sn 3.3 Subhāsitasuttaṃ](#)).

He distinguished four poorly spoken words and four well-spoken words.

- (1) Unwholesome or poorly spoken words and wholesome or well-spoken words
- (2) Unworthy or unjust words and worthy or just words.
- (3) Unpleasant or unendurable words and pleasant or enduring words
- (4) False words and true words.

Then Ven. Vangīsa (the arahant poet) praised the Buddha with the attractive verses: Speak only not cause us pain and not hurt each other. These are truly well-spoken words. Use pleasant speech which makes people glad, and not resorting to evil speech. These are pleasant speech. The speech, the Awaken one (i.e., the Buddha) speaks is leading to Nibbāna, putting an end to dukkha. This is the only surpassed or worthiest speech. Therefore, we should take care of the wholesome and friendly qualities constantly watch the movements of our minds and speeches.

In the Discourse to Prince Abhaya (Abhaya-rāja-kumāra Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya, MN.58 Abhayarājakumārasuttaṃ) the Buddha divided the speeches into six types. In the discourse, the Buddha gave the factors that went into deciding what was and was not worth saying. The main factors were three: a statement was untrue or true; unbeneficial or beneficial, and not pleasing or pleasing to others. The Buddha only spoke what was true and beneficial. He would look for the time to speak these things whether or not it was pleasing to others.

With the main three factors, speeches can be divided into six types:

- (1) Untrue, unbeneficial and not pleasing
- (2) True, unbeneficial and not pleasing
- (3) True, beneficial and not pleasing
- (4) Untrue, unbeneficial and pleasing
- (5) True, unbeneficial and pleasing
- (6) True, beneficial and pleasing

The Buddha spoke only what was true and beneficial. It might be pleased or not pleasing to others. But he would look for the appropriate time to speak them. So the Buddha spoke only (3) and (6) types of speech. One of the attributes of the Buddha is sugato—the well-spoken person (sugato also has other meanings). The first quality of the Dhamma is svākkhāta—well expounded, that is good in the beginning, in the middle and the end.

Therefore, the Buddha was the well-spoken person. His speeches were educating and training to become a worthy person. The speech the Buddha spoke for attaining Nibbāna that made an end to sufferings (dukkha). So, it was unsurpassed. The

Buddha himself encouraged people for it. Therefore, among the speeches, the speech on the Four Noble Truths is the most blessing and the best protection.

Last I want to quote a sutta and the topics of conversation in the Aṅguttara Nikāya. It is very important because we converse with people nearly all times. With conversations, human beings create a lot of wholesome and unwholesome kammās in all walks of life from the family level to government level. Therefore, we should take it very seriously. In the sutta, the Buddha reminded it to the monks. But it also relates to lay-people. If everyone follows the instruction will bring happiness and peace in life and not pollute the mind, which is the source.

Topics of Conversation (Aṅguttara Nikāya)

The Buddha was staying in Sāvattī, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. One day a large number of monks, on returning from alms-round, gathered in the meeting hall and were engaged in many kinds of bestial topics of conversation: conversation about kings, robbers, and ministers of state; armies, alarms, and battles, foods and drink, clothing, furniture, garlands and scents; relatives, vehicles, villages, towns, cities, countryside, women and heroes; the gossip of the street and well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity; the creation of the world and the sea; talks of whether things exist or not.

The Buddha emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to the meeting hall. He asked the monks what they were talking about. They mentioned their conversation, and he told them that it was not right for monks to have these kinds of conversation. He taught them the proper conversation.

There are ten topics of proper conversation. Talk on modesty, contentment, seclusion, non-entanglements, arousing persistence, virtue, concentration, discernment, release, and the knowledge of vision and release. If you were to engage repeatedly in these ten topics of conversation, would outshine even the Sun and the Moon, so mighty, so powerful to say nothing of the wanderers of other sects.

We are not only engaging in conversation with others but also nowadays listening to a lot of them from the media; such as radio, movie, internet, etc. Most of us will never think that these media are teaching and educating us all the time. Why are there a lot of youth problems in family, school, and societies? Because they were educated by some media. If parents are not controlling and leading them in the right direction, most problems will never be solved. Instead, their minds will become more polluted. Speech is so important that it can lead to problems, disharmony, violence and wars in politics, economics, nationalism, racism, religion, etc. These are ill speech, hate

speech, and others. Therefore, parents and teachers should always use well spoken speech to teach and train their children and students at homes and schools as the most important duty and responsibility.

The speech also can lead to harmony, peace, love, compassion, and enlightenment. There are eight causes for wrong views to arise: Two of the causes are very important, and the Buddha mentioned it very often in some of his discourses. These are: listening to wrong talks/ teachings and unwise attention (*ayonisomanasikāra*). Right view also based on listening to the right talks/ teachings and wise attention. In the Noble Eightfold Path, right view comes first, because it will lead to the right directions. Therefore, the wrong view also will lead to the wrong directions.

So, the outcomes of the wrong view are bad consequences and right views are good consequences. Topics on speech are wide and profound. People are using it every day in the life. And if we can use it skillfully, then it is a better world to live. To understand more on speech, it needs to study the suttas. The Buddha was called *Satthā deva-manussānaṃ*—Teacher of gods and humans. Therefore, well-spoken words are real protection and blessing.

11. Support for One's Parents

The commentary explained the support for one's parents as helping them in washing their feet, doing massage, bathing them and provide them with the four requisites. The reasons for attending upon them were: they help their children in many ways, desire for the children goodness with love and compassion, etc. therefore, the children are still not be able to repay their parents' kindness and gratitude even they carry the parents around on the heads for 100 years. Parents raised them, nurtured and showed them the world; so consider the parents as their first teacher. Therefore, the blessing of support for one's parents brought praise and goodness here and would bring happiness after death in future. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, there are four suttas describing the relationship between parents and children which will maintain a harmony and well-being of a family.

The Buddha said in sutta no. 34 of the "Book of the Two": There were two persons whom men could not easily repaid, i.e. parents (AN. 2.34); even we are attending on them in many different ways; such as massaging, bathing, rubbing their limbs, cleaning the parents' urine and excrement; even one help them become a universal monarch (cakkavatti rāja) who was the most wealthy and powerful man on earth.

The reasons were: the parents helped the children a lot, brought them up, feed them and educated them to know the world. And then the Buddha mentioned the ways how to repay the parents' love, kindness and gratitude. These were: helping them establish in faith (Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha), in virtuous behavior, in generosity and in wisdom. Only in all these ways, one had done enough and paid our debts and gratitude, it could even be said to be more than enough. These are considered to be related to spiritual development.

Book Three; Sutta no. 31: like a Brahma. (AN. 3.31 Sabrahmaka suttaṃ)

In the sutta, the Buddha referred to the parents in three ways: Brahma, the first teachers and the gift worthy persons if they revered by their children at home. The reason was they had love and compassion for their children. Therefore, a wise person should treat the parents with respect and special attention. Give them food and drink, clothes and bedding, etc. The children should do the services of massaging, bathing and washing the parents' feet. With all these services to parents, the person was praised in this world and it brings happiness to him in heaven after his death. (Why did the Buddha refer to parents as Brahma god? Parents had love, compassion, appreciative joy to the children. These were the qualities of Brahma)

Book Five; sutta no. 39: A son (AN. 5.39 Puttasuttaṃ)

In the sutta, the Buddha mentioned the parents wished for a son to be born in their family with the following five prospects. These were:

- ① They supports him; so he would support them
- ② The son would do work for them
- ③ The family lineage would be extended
- ④ The son would manage the inheritance
- ⑤ After the parents' death, the son would make offering on their behalf.

The Buddha continued to say that wise people wished for a son with these five prospects, so good people with gratitude and appreciation supported their parents. Remembering how the parents helping them in the past, he did the same things for them.

By following the parents' advice and suggestions, the children with faith and virtue continued the family lineage. These children were worthy of praise by others.

The Buddha's teaching on the relationship between parents and children was very similar to the teaching of the Chinese sages. Filial obligation is the heavenly way and Dhamma and that everyone needs to do it.

For any sage and noble being, it was the same and like a truth. Without it human is not humane anymore. It can be also like a foundation for other goodness to develop. The Chinese history and civilization is a very good evidence.

The Indian history and civilization may be the same reason lasting for thousands of year. Human beings are on the way to disaster and destruction if lacking of this important blessing. How can human beings be survived lacking of compassion love, gratitude, consideration, respect, peace and harmony starting from the family life?

Surely it is the way to down fall, from human world into the Wok.

Everyone's life has duties. We have filial obligations to support and look after our parents. Nowadays human beings are very weak in this duty and even neglect about it. This is not a good sign for society. It is the sign for selfishness, ingratitude, disrespect, no empathy, no love, etc. Someone neglects this duty and obligation; it is sure that he cannot be good to others also.

The Buddha and the ancient sages emphasized this duty strongly. In the whole Chinese history and culture, there were highly developed philosophy and practices in this virtue as filial piety. A man who does not have this virtue will never have progress and no future. Why must we support for one's parents? There are many good reasons for it.

Someone has this virtue can be called a humane person, and without it, a beastly person. If anyone has a common sense, this is not difficult to understand. Our beginning of life totally depends on parents. Our survivals in life are starting from our mothers' wombs until to grow up can take our own responsibilities. The most fundamental importance is the basic education which our parents, especially the mothers, taught and trained us when we were young. This basic education is on morality and virtues.

Nowadays, most people neglect and overlook its importance. Mothers are our first teachers, and our progress in the right and wholesome directions are in their hands. It is also true that our failure in the wrong and unwholesome direction is in their hands. Good emperors, leaders, sages, and great people came from the care of good, intelligent, and wise parents. We even can say filial obligations are the foundation of all goodness to arise. It represents gratitude, respect, love, sympathy, and concern for others.

There is a saying: "The hand swings the cradle conquers the world." A woman has the most important role within the society, even those people in the society of today maybe not aware of it. In ancient time Chinese sages and wise people knew this point very clear and profoundly. Therefore, they created and handed it down a lot of written records in texts and books from generation to generation.

In ancient China even before the Buddha, there were teaching by sages to pregnant women how to look after the baby inside the womb for the baby's physical and mental well-being. As far as I know the first record about it was the Chou Dynasty related to Emperor Chou Wun Wang. This great emperor was quite well known in Chinese history and an intelligent, wise and a noble. The record mentioned how his mother (the Queen) looked after the embryo during the pregnancy.

This ancient Chinese education for mother is called *Thaī Gyauk* (*Thaī Gyauk*, prenatal education) in Mandarin. So any woman who wants a physically and mentally well-being child should look after one's mind and action during the pregnancy and after gave birth until some years while teaching and training one's child.

This kind of teaching was not related to Chinese tradition alone. It was also mentioned in some Buddhist texts ancient or modern. It's even mentioned how the bodhisatta's mother Mayadevi looked after the pregnancy in the Buddha's story. It was mentioned the following episode on the life of the Buddha in some Burmese Buddhist texts. Queen Mayadevi observed the eight precepts (uposatha sila) even sometime before the bodhisatta took rebirth from Tusita Heaven. Some famous Burmese monks' biographies also mentioned about it. But the Chinese tradition had text books on this subject. The other traditions seemed to be oral. The Buddha and Chinese sages knew the power of the mind and its effect on the physical phenomena.

Nowadays with the advanced of science and technology, some scientists also knew it by research and experiment. Some years ago, a Burmese woman in a remote area of upper Burma gave birth to two children, and their physical appearances looked like European. The cause of the appearance was nothing to do with human genetics. Two French medical staffs went there and gave the people injections for health reason. But this woman was afraid of westerner and hid in her house. So the village headman and others pulled her out and gave her an injection. She was so afraid that this incident had a very strong impression in her mind. As a result she gave birth to two children like Europeans.

There was a Burmese monk whose head had many scars. When other monks asked him how he got these scars, he said it was with him from birth. In his past life (before this present life) he was beaten by a bandit on the head. He died with the serious injuries on the head which related to his present scars. His mind was focusing on the pain which had strong impression on the mind.

Sometimes ago there was a documentary film on this subject by westerners. There was a scene of two pregnant western women dancing with their big bare bellies with music playing near them. It was too ugly to see and not a pleasant music. They did it in the wrong way. Woman folks who want good children should research the ancient Chinese text or book in this subject. But there is a very important factor we should not forget. This is moral standard or moral foundation within oneself.

Unwholesome mental states or mind with verbal and physical actions also in the same way. Smelly and putrid fish will never attract bees to come near it but dirty flies are rushing. This is natural law.

She can teach and train her children to become a noble person, a sage and a great man for the society, and also can produce a wicked, evil, dangerous, and criminal for the society. A good, intelligent, and wise daughter is born to good parents. And then later in life will become a good wife and mother. So, a happy, peaceful, and

harmonious society is a lot of dependence on women. Therefore, it is not surprising that filial obligations or filial piety are the fundamental quality or virtue in Chinese culture, philosophy, education, and practice in Chinese history.

Supporting for one's parents is a noble action and must have to be done. With its obligation and action brings a lot of merit, satisfaction, and happiness. It is important to understand the gratitude of parents and should always remember it. To forget the duty and obligation is very bad indeed. We should not feel remorse or remember whatever bad things have been done before. We determine not to repeat it is enough. These things can appear near the time of death and bring more sufferings.

But for good things and on Dhamma, it is good to remember and reflect them very often, e.g., one's own dāna and sīla, reflection on death, etc. There was a remarkable Jātaka story on a parent's love (Jāt. 540, Sāma-Jātaka). This was the story of the Bodhisatta in one of his past lives as a hermit Suvaṇṇasāma. He and both of his parents were living in a forest as ascetics. His parents were blind, and he had to look after them. One day the king of Benares came for hunting in the forest and shot Suvaṇṇasāma with a poison arrow because he mistook him as a deer.

To save his life, both parents and the female deity who was also the mother of the Bodhisatta for seven past lives in the past, each one of them made the asseveration of Truth. Both parents said that they loved him more than their lives. The deity said that her love of Suvaṇṇasāma was more than anyone she had before. With the power of their truthful asseveration made the arrow poison disappeared.

Someone can ask this question; “Of the parent's love who love is stronger?” In Dhammapada, on the Chapter of Mind (Chapter 3 Cittavagga), the story of Soreyya gave a clear-cut answer (Dhp. 043). The love of a mother is more than the father. This story was strange and interesting. It expressed the power of the mind, and we should not neglect its functioning. Soreyya, the son of a rich man and some attendants went for a bath. On the way, he met the Ven. Māha-kaccāyana, who was adjusting his robes outside the city for alms-round.

He saw the golden complexion of the Thera and thought, “How I wish the Thera were my wife, or else the complexion of my wife was like him.” As the unwholesome thought aroused in him and his sex changed into a woman. She ran away and arrived at Texila and met a rich man. She married him, and two sons were born to her. Also, there were two sons from the previous marriage as a man. Later she had the chance to meet and offer foods to the Ven. Mahākaccāyana.

She respectfully asked forgiveness to the Thera for her wrong thought on him some

years before. Then the Thera said to her: "I forgive you." As soon as these words were spoken, she changed back to a man as before. With reflection, he was feeling very weary and repulsive of all these things and left the household life and became a monk. After that, he was often asked; "Whom do you love more, the two sons you had as a father or the other two you had as a mother?" To them, he would answer that his love for those born of the womb was greater.

The important lesson we gain from here is we cannot think about things foolishly out of control. We should not neglect the mind and become its slaves and have to control and train it for one's benefit and others. Any sexual fantasy and misconduct, including homosexuality, could bring problems, dangers, and sufferings.

The Buddha compared parents with the deity of the Brahma god because they treated their children with love, sympathy, and appreciative joy and for success. We could appreciate the mother's love, if think about carefully her periods of pregnancy (9 months) and during the delivery (It must be very painful indeed, even sometimes have to risk their lives). After the delivery, she had to look after you carefully in all possible ways.

She had to feed you with her breast milk until we could take foods by ourselves. Therefore, a mother's love is enriching with courage, patience, unselfishness, care, noble, and has the healing power. When I am contemplating these things, it makes me cry. Mothers are very noble, and their love is touching to the heart. Where is breast milk coming from? It is changing from her blood.

Once a Chinese movie director kept his wife breast milk in a small bottle for some years. One day he took out and checked it. It changed back into blood. There was a story, a cow was feeding her calf, and at that time a hunter came and hit her with a spear. Instead of harming her, the spear was bent at the tip. Unselfish love is very powerful, and it has healing power.

Parents are our first teachers, especially mothers. Our progress in life depends on their education and training to us. Good and moral people, great men and sages are the outcomes of proper education and training. It has to be started from family life. Therefore, the proper duties of a mother are very important for the growth and progress of the good qualities of the child. Without a good and skillful mother, the child's future is hopeless. We cannot easily repay for the kindness and gratitude of our parents.

According to the Buddha, the best way to pay it back was helping them grow in conviction (saddhā), virtue (sīla), learning (suta), generosity (cāga) and discernment

(paññā). It is very important to treat our parents very well, and cannot treat them like others, e.g., the anger you have on your parents is more harmful. Insulting the parents is like burning oneself with fire.

The Buddha mentioned seven kinds of fire in the Aggi Sutta—the Fire Discourse Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN.7.47 Dutiya-aggisuttaṃ). The fire of greed, hatred, and delusion have to be removed. The fire of parents, husband, and sages (samaṇa) have to be worshipped (showing respect and making supports). The last fire has to be taken care; that is fuel fire. A husband gives security to the family. Therefore, he has to be respected.

If someone very badly treating his or her parents and will get the same outcome from his or her children. Both of them cannot get good children of their own. This we can see in the life of King Ajātasattu. He killed his father King Bimbisāra for power. Later in life, he was also killed by his son. Again his son was killed by his grandson.

Three generations had been committed patricides. Nowadays if we observe our present societies, there are more and more cases of insulting, beating, and killing parents than before. We can see more and older homeless people on the streets. These and other things are the signs of decadence in human societies. Human beings are creating their hells on Earth. These are also predictions for their future to come.

12. Assistance to One's Wife and Children

The commentary interpreted a wife to anyone of the 20 kinds of wives. For majority of people, this is not the case. A man with many wives and women is indulgent in sexual pleasures which is low, ignoble and not leading to mental and physical well-being. The Buddha taught Siṅgāla as how a husband should attend upon his wife in the Siṅgālavada Sutta, which will be mentioned latter. Another way of maintaining the relationship was mentioned in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, Book IV.

This was called the four ways of sustaining relationship (saṅgaha-vatthu) between people. These were: ① giving (Dāna), ② endearing speech (peyyavajja), ③ beneficent conduct (atthacariyā) and ④ impartiality (samānattatā). These four ways also can be called causes for popularity.

Humans have different natures and characteristics that we can use any of them for maintaining sustaining relationship with others. Some prefer gifts, so using dāna; some prefers endearing speech, so using pleasant speech; some prefers beneficial conduct, so giving suggestions and advice to them how to do things in the beneficial ways; some prefers impartiality which means treating them equally, i.e. doing things together.

The Buddha gave the analogy of sustaining relationship to be like a linchpin of a rolling chariot. He said parents would not be able to obtain esteem and respect from the children without these four factors. They were also praised and respected by the wise.

In Sakkasaṃyutta, there was a sutta mentioned about Sakka, lord of the devas and Mātali the charioteer, who worshipped the householders. They were at that time ready to go to the park grounds to see the beautiful scenery. Before he climbed up into the chariot Sakka raised his joined hands and worshipped the different quarters. Mātali was curious about it and asked Sakka whom he bowed and worshipped.

Sakka answered that he worshipped those endowed with Sīla, long trained in Samādhi, who had properly gone forth for the holy life to end dukkha. And then Sakka continued to say that he also worshipped the householders who made merits, lay Buddhists possessing of Sīla and who righteously supported a wife. After these words Mātali also did the same thing following Sakka.

According to this story, even deities are respecting and worshipping men who have merits, Sīla and assistance to one's wife and children.

In Sigālovāda Sutta (DN.31 Sigālovada Suttantaṃ, Siṅgālasuttaṃ)—Advice to Sigāla, Dīgha Nikāya, the Buddha gave instructions to Sigāla, the house holder's son, on the duties and obligations as a husband to wife and children.

Assistance to one's wife in five ways:

- (1) By respecting her
- (2) By his courtesy
- (3) By being faithful to her
- (4) By handing over authority to her
- (5) By providing her with adornments

Assistance to one's children in five ways:

- (1) Restrain them from evil
- (2) Direct them towards the goods
- (3) Train them to a profession
- (4) Arrange suitable marriages for them
- (5) In due time hand over the inheritance to them.

The five duties and obligations of a wife:

- (1) By doing her duties well
- (2) By hospitality to attendants, etc.
- (3) By her fidelity
- (4) By looking after his earnings
- (5) By skill and Industry in all her business dealings

The five duties and obligations of a child:

- (1) Once I was supported by them now, I will be their support
- (2) I will perform those duties they have to perform
- (3) I will maintain the lineage and tradition of my family
- (4) I will look after my inheritance
- (5) I will give alms or generosity(cāga) on behalf of them(When the parents are dead)

This 12th blessing/protection of assistance to one's wife and children is a very interesting and important topic, and it has a lot to say and for contemplation. It is also wide and profound subject and depending on how someone views on it. People who want to penetrate about them should study, research, and contemplate all the teaching of ancient sages and the Buddha. Most people using or spending a lot of time and money to study and research for nourishing of greed, hatred, and delusion, which are the mind pollutants. Instead, they should work with the mind which is the closest to them than anyone else. It can bring them to happiness or destruction.

These cover from family life to society (i.e., the eleventh and twelfth blessings). Each family life is the smallest part of society. Therefore, it is like each part of the whole body. If any part of the body has a problem or becomes abnormal and you will surely suffer or die. If each family could handle their matters very well and will solve many problems which nowadays people encounter in societies.

Therefore, it is so very fundamental that good education within the family life can have strong effects and influences in society. We should not only take education as making for a living. Our experiences with all the six senses are educations. Therefore, no one can free from it. Education can be wholesome and unwholesome. Even science and technology, if we use it properly and rightly become right knowledge, and improperly and wrongly become wrong knowledge.

All other human knowledge also have to be counted, including religions. All wrong and harmful actions come from wrong views and thinking. The assistance to one's child is the duty and obligation of all parents. As the Buddha mentioned it five ways; the most important ones are three. These are: restrain them from evils; directing them towards good; and train them to a profession.

The one and two are fundamental education, which is morality and virtue, and without it, the child will never become good person and going in the right direction. Here I will present two stories in the Buddha's time. The first is the story of the son of Mahādhana in Jāravagga—Ageing; and the other, the story of Kāla, the son of Anāthapiṇḍika in Lokavagga—The World, both from Dhammapada. The first one without morality and virtue had negative results, and the other was the opposite.

The Story of the Son of Mahādhana:

The son of Mahādhana did not have any education while he was young. When he came of age married the daughter of a rich man, and she also had no education. Here both sides of the parents did not do their duties and obligations as parents, and among the five duties, only the fifth one was fulfilled. (In due time both sides handed over the inheritances to them), and without the other factors, it became useless and harmful.

Therefore, some wise parents, even they were rich, not leaving wealth behind for their children; but they only gave them good education; such as morality, virtue, professional works, etc., so that they could stand on their own feet in life. When the parents on both sides passed away, they inherited a lot of money and very rich. Both

of them were ignorant and only spending the money by wasting it (just only for sensual pleasure). They just ate and drank had a good time by squandering their money. It was very sure that they squandering their wealth with bad companions. Ignorant and foolish people were easily cheated by others.

After they had spent all and later sold their fields and the house. Later they became very poor and helpless because they did not know how to make a living and became beggars and begging on the streets. Wealth and power are like very poisonous snakes for the fools, and it becomes a real treasure to the wise. The problems in society are there are more fools than the wise.

One day the Buddha saw him leaning against the wall of the monastery and eating the leftovers given by the novices; seeing him and the Buddha smiled. Ven. Ānanda asked the Buddha for the reason of his smiling. Then the Buddha answered to Ven. Ānanda;

“Ānanda, look at this son of a rich man; he had lived a useless life, aimless life of pleasure. If he had learned to look after his riches and in the first stage of his life would have been the top ranking rich man. If he had become a monk, could have been an arahant and his wife an anāgāmi (the non-returner). If he had learned to look after his riches in the second stage of his life, he would have been a second ranking rich man.

He could have been an anāgāmin; and his wife a sakadāgāmi (the once-returner), etc., if he had become a monk. However, he lost all the riches, and also all the chances of realization of the paths and fruits because he had done nothing all the three stages of his life.” In this story, we can see the importance of the four wheels mentioned in the Wheels Discourse already described at directing oneself right which related to the present life and its actions.

The Story of Kāla, Son of Anāthapiṇḍika:

Kāla, the son of Anāthapiṇḍika always kept himself away, whenever the Buddha and his company of monks came to their house. Anāthapiṇḍika was worried that if his son kept on behaving in this way would not get any benefit. So he used money as a bait to change his son. He promised to give him 100 coins if the son consented to go to the monastery and keep the sabbath for one day. So Kāla went there and returned home early the next day without listening to any Dhamma discourse.

Next time, Anāthapiṇḍika said to his son; “My son, if you learned a stanza of the

Buddha's teaching, I will give you 1,000 coins on your return.” So, Kāla went to the Monastery again. This time he tried to learn something from the Buddha. The Buddha gave him a short stanza for learning by heart, and at the same time made him forgot it. Thus he had to repeat it so many times that in the end came to understand the full meaning of the Dhamma and then attained the Path and Fruit of a stream-winner (sotāpanna).

Early on the next morning, Kāla followed the Buddha and the saṅgha to his house. His father offered the rice gruel to the Buddha and the saṅgha. After that, the father brought 1000 coins and gave him, in front of the Buddha, but he refused to take it. Then the Buddha told Anāthapiṇḍika; “Dāyaka, your son had attained the Fruition State of a stream-winner which is much better and greater than the richest off of a universal Monarch, the status of celestial beings and Brahmā-gods.”

These two stories in the time of the Buddha gave us food for thought, on the parents’ duties and obligations to children. If they neglect it and the children will be like the son of Mahādhana and going downhill in their lives. It was a nuisance for the family and society. The two outcomes were like heaven and earth. For the parents to behave like Anāthapiṇḍika, they first should have the qualities of good and skillful parents. They must have the education and training from their parents, with experiences and learning (suta).

Therefore, fundamental education and training should begin at the family level. The ancient Chinese Sages understood it very clear and not much different from the Buddha. The systems and skillful means in the Chinese texts were more in details and rich experiences. At least it might have over 3,000 years of Chinese history. In the Sigālovāda Sutta, the first duty and obligation of a wife are doing her duties well. The wise of the past had a lot to say on these duties and obligations.

They had the clear-cut right views on these matters. One of the very important duties of a wife is as a mother. A very important duty of a mother is educating and training her children in the right and wholesome direction. Nowadays, a lot of mothers neglect this duty and obligation. Instead, their children are educating and training by many kinds of media; such as video games, TV, movies, internet, music, etc. There are a lot of unwholesome and unhealthy contents in them.

Only someone knows the Buddha's teachings, and the sages will know the harmfulness of these things. Why are there nowadays more youth problems in families, schools and societies than before? Because mental pollution are increasing like the other external pollution. External pollution are the reflections of the human mind. A skillful mother comes from a good wife. And a good wife comes from a

good daughter. She is not selected by votes, but with the upbringing of educating and training in the right and wise direction. We should not forget that there are more fools than wise in the world.

Most people do not take ethics, morality, and virtues as very important and fundamental for human beings. Therefore, they think, speak, and act foolishly out of delusion (moha). These are the foundation of all goodness to arise. These good and wholesome qualities of the mind are not invented by sages and the Buddha. They discovered and penetrated it with wisdom. These are parts of nature, mind laws, and also affect the physical world. They have the universal characteristic, such as the law of kamma. They are also closely related. They also represent human standards and status. Human beings are the masters of their destiny.

Other types of living beings do not have this chance and opportunity. Therefore, the right and fundamental education are very important for everyone. Parents are the first teachers of children and more important than school teachers. So it has to begin early in family life.

We may classify education into four types from the teachings of ancient text of the Chinese sages.

(1) Education on family life and society: These are on human relationship within family, such as—between parents and children, husband and wife, among siblings. On human relationship in society, such as—between friends, senior and subordinate, etc. All these are based on the standards of ethics, morality and virtue, etc. We can also see these kinds of teaching in the Siṅgāla Sutta—Advice to Lay People, Dīgha Nikāya (DN 31 Sigālovada Suttantaṃ, Sīgālasuttaṃ, Siṅgālasuttaṃ); and there are similarities between them.

(2) Education on the law of kamma: This is the province of Buddhism. The subject on the law of kamma is profound, deep, related to all living beings and fathomless, except for a Buddha. It is one of the inconceivable phenomena and the province of a Buddha. Therefore, except a Buddha, no one can fully penetrate it. Even we can say that it is the perfect knowledge of a Buddha. If he was only giving the teaching on the law of kamma and no other teaching, still no one equals or greater than him. This law of kamma governs all kinds of living beings.

Why most living beings during their wandering in the round of existence encountered many different kinds of sufferings? The main answer is they do not know the law of kamma and never heard about it. Even the majority of Buddhists, they know about it superficially, not profound and clear enough. Therefore, they cannot use it well

enough in their daily life. Even though most Buddhists encounter the teaching and not receive many benefits which should be.

(3) Worldly educations: Many kinds and types of education of the world; schools, universities, professions for a living and ordinary knowledge, etc.

(4) Religious education: It relates to all the major religions and does not include the cults. With careful and wise contemplation; whatever people religions or faiths and the cultural background may be the education on law of kamma should be in the first place. Because it is the universal law and all living beings are under these laws. All beings cannot escape time and space; it is the same as with the law of kamma; all human actions; wholesome, unwholesome, and mixed are under this universal law.

After studying and contemplating on laws of kamma, its working principles will have clear knowledge on it. And then study, contemplate and practice ethics, morality, and virtue become more effective. If a human being can study, contemplate, and practice these two educations (law of kamma and ethics) in their daily life, the human world will be like heaven on Earth.

In the Sigālovāda Sutta, on the duties and obligations of a husband to a wife; the third one is by being faithful to her. In the same way, a wife to a husband is by her fidelity. Faithfulness and fidelity between husband and wife are very important for the family and also to society. Some of the problems in family and society are connecting with infidelity between husband and wife. It will create unhappy marriages and harmful to family members, especially children.

Then this affects society. A lot of youth problems are connecting to broken marriages. Because it affects the mind of children and they cannot have proper education and training. Why nowadays more youth problems and crimes than before? According to some researches, if there are more and more broken marriages, create more and more youth problems and crimes. Most people only take adultery as sexual misconduct, but there are also other sexual misconduct harmful to oneself, and then to society. Even these sexual misconduct are like entertainment in some media.

One of the most important things woman folks should contemplate is the problem of abortion in the world today. Nowadays most people think it very lightly. This is one of the serious misconduct by some mothers-to-be and mothers. This is the act of murdering one's own offspring. Even though not serious than matricide, this action make human beings inferior than animal. Some animals even give up their lives for protecting their offspring.

There was a true story happened in China long time ago. I am sure there were also many real stories about female animals protecting their offspring around the world. A Chinese scholar invited some of his friends for lunch. His favorite dish was the eel meat. He put some eels which were alive into the boiling pot. And then a strong thing happened in front of them. One of the plumb eels curved its part of the long body above the boiling water.

The scholar was very curious about this phenomenon, so he took out the eel and cut it, opened the curved body. What they found out was many small eels (offspring) were inside. This is the noble motherly love and compassion. It is the natural instinct for all mothers. From that day onwards, this man became a vegetarian. For a mother it is too cruel for killing her own child who is very innocent. Whatever reason terminates the embryo is just one's own fault and the outcome of indulgence in sexual pleasures and sexual misconduct. Murdering one's own baby is not the right way to solve social problem, but to restraint in sexual misbehavior.

We should not forget the natural law of action \Rightarrow reaction. In future life to come your offspring will be your real enemies and the same thing will happen to you. Nowadays, they even are making law allowing to murder one's own child in many countries. This is the most stupid and foolish thing human beings can do it. It seems human beings are in competition for killing animals (i.e., for foods, games, etc.) and murdering one's child. Competitions are American syndrome (taṇhā) which leads to sufferings.

How many animals are killed every day around the world for foods alone. In the same way, how many babies are murdered by their mothers around the world everyday. The Buddha said human births were rare if compared with other births (the four woeful planes of existence). Therefore, mothers to-be and mothers should develop love instead of lust. Husbands should also in the same way develop love towards their wives and not with lust. Then human world will become a Heaven.

13. Consistency in One's Work

People translated the Pāli verse—*Anākulā ca kammantā* as differently; such as consistency in one's working an honest occupation and peaceful occupation. None of the meanings cover all the meanings as explained by the commentary. Peaceful or honest occupation as agriculture, cattle-rearing (for what purpose?), business, etc., were examples given by commentary. It mentioned how to carry out them; the ways were in a timely and suitable manners, with diligence, vigor, energy and harmlessness.

The opposites were: doing things with faults as untimeliness, unsuitable, inertia, laziness, slackness, etc. This blessing is connected with the above two blessing of supporting parents and assisting to wife and children. Progress and prosperity in the family business or works can be carried out successfully from the other blessings.

The Buddha compared two kinds of persons, someone doing his task properly and someone not. The improper person was sleeping in day time and waking at night time. He was an alcoholic and a womanizer and could not keep a decent home. He wasted his time by complaining as it was too cold, too hot, or too late, etc. In this way he postponed his task or job by giving many reasons. By neglecting the task or work, he did not get any benefit. Those who was active, energetic and persistent in whatever he was doing had prosperity and happiness.

Here the commentary did not mention about spiritual matter concerning with this blessing. Someone with these qualities of ethical and moral standards (also mentioned in the Chinese tradition) surely will develop in his spiritual endeavour with the same as consistency in one's work or practice. People who have these qualities will success in worldly and spiritual matters. This is the true blessing as a human.

At doing one's task, we should not waste time and do it later. We should be active, energetic, and persistent in whatever we are doing. Do only the kinds of task or job which should be done. This is not harming to oneself and others; whereas it benefit oneself and others. There are some ignorant and deluded people doing silly and foolish things just for money and fame, even give up their lives for it. We should do things which only have values; not trivial, meaningless, frivolous, silly, and inferior.

Nowadays, human beings are doing all these meaningless things than before. Do human beings become wiser than before? Do they progress or regression? If we observe the societies and environments, all kinds of internal and external pollution is going on. Why is that? Anthropologists say: Human beings are developing from a type of ape. If it is true, then human beings should become wiser and intelligent. This

is Evolution. But if we observe and contemplate about human beings, they are closer to ape than human.

The human mind is becoming more and more like a monkey. Is it human becoming in devolution? Evolution and devolution are in our mind. If someone behaves like an animal, then he is in devolution. You cannot measure progress or Evolution with power, money, fame, and the amount of sensual pleasure. These are the ways to downfall. It is nothing to do with the external matters but the internal ones. So, each human creates hell, animal, ghost, heaven, etc. for himself on Earth. This also his future destiny after he dies.

Man on the highest level of evolution can become a Buddha, and to the lowest level of devolution becomes a hell being. All the levels are in each one of us. One early morning in June, there was a pink lotus flower opened its beautiful and fragrant petals in a small pond. It decorated the Earth with its beauty and purity. After sometimes the sun was rising higher, and then the weather became very hot. The lotus closed its petals and protected itself from the strong heat. It would be quite stupid and foolish for today's human beings to still continue to do all the foolish things although they know all the dangers come out from pollution.

Could human beings have a future? Yes, they have. Only they behave like a human; not like an animal, ghost, and hell-being is. They should only do things which have values and for the welfare of the human race and nature. If we practice samatha and vipassanā regularly with consistency is a great blessing and protection. Consistency in one's work is very important whatever task we are doing, whether it is worldly or spiritual matters. We should not spoil it by laziness, carelessness with wasting, and postponing of time.

During the time of the Buddha, there was a good story on these points. Three friends became monks. Two of them learned meditation and instruction from the Buddha. After that, they went to a secluded place, practiced diligently, and realized the Dhamma. They came back and went to see the Buddha. The Buddha was praising of them. The third one who was lazy and wasting time in the monastery heard about it. He also wanted to be praised by the Buddha in front of the others. Therefore, he was practicing hard in the monastery. Because of his restlessness and carelessness in the practice and fell seriously and broke his hip. So his two friends had to take care of him and could not leave the place. The Buddha knew about this and told them about their past lives.

In one of their past lives; these monks were the students of the Bodhisatta—who was a teacher. One day the teacher asked the students to collect fire woods in the forest

for the next morning meal because they had to go to a distant place in the early morning for an invitation. All the students went to the forest and did their duties properly. But the lazy student (the 3rd injured monk) not did his job properly. Instead, he chose a big tree, lied down and slept, thinking that near the time of leaving he could go up and break the branches for fire woods. At the time of going back; he quickly got up, climbed the tree, and broke some of the branches.

He had done it in a rush and carelessness that the tip of a branch hit one of his eyes. He was suffered in pain and came down quickly, took the wet branches of the fire woods, and followed behind the others. His wet fire woods were mixed with the dry ones. The servant did not know it and picked up the wet ones to cook for the gruel. At last the students missed the chance to the invitation.

This story taught us a good lesson. We should not do things with disinterest, wasting time, in a rush, improperly, disarray and confused. What about today, human beings are doing things? Are they better than this monk or student? By studying, observing, and contemplating today human and society will know that it is not better. Some politicians, business people (including economists), scientists, technologist, artists, etc. are viewing and doing things with greed, hatred, and delusion for power, wealth and fame. They are not only harming themselves (they have to pay for their kammic consequences) but also to the human race.

The reasons are not difficult to see; severe climate changes and all sorts of pollution, both internal and external ones and leaving a dangerous Earth for the future generation. Human beings, however crazy and craving for power, wealth and fame, at near death they cannot take anything with them. Even the clothes they wear on, their power, wealth and fame cannot do anything when a very severe drought comes.

As a Buddhist, the best protection and blessing is consistency in one's work to end dukkha. This is the most important task for all: i.e., the Noble Eightfold Path—*sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. Therefore, we should not waste time by doing many meaningless and useless things. It will be in a miserable situation (miserable deaths and rebirths) at near death if we miss this chance.

14. Giving

The commentary explained it as the volition of relinquishing to others with requisites or other thing. It was non-greed and associated with the above volition. There is a Pāli word—*cāga* which means generosity and relinquishing. It mentioned ten objects of giving, these were; food and drink, robes or clothes, bedding and dwelling places, ointments, garlands, fragrances, lamps and vehicles. Robes or clothes, food and drink, bedding and dwelling places, and ointments are included in the four requisites of a monk. These are basic needs for a human being (clothes, food, dwelling and medicine). Monks also can use the other four objects—garlands, fragrances, and lamps and vehicles. The first three items can offer a Buddha image (shrine) and *cetiya*. Vehicles (cars) can be used for the monastery businesses. It seemed to be these objects were for giving to the monks. For lay communities and organisations, it can include many other things (e.g., refugee camps).

Dāna is quite an extensive subject. We can find about it in many suttas in Nikāyas. It can be said that the very basic and important practice in human societies. Without non-greed or relinquishment love and concerning for other will not happen with greed, selfishness and stingy we cannot share and help others. In the ten perfections (*pāramīs*) the first perfection appeared to the mind of the hermit Sumedha bodhisatta was *dāna pāramīs*. It seems to be the basic one and easier for practice and develop. Actually, *dāna* practice is very near to us. It is only we do not know or unaware of it. We all experienced it even at very young age. Our parents are very good example for *dāna*. They gave their time, energy and money to help and support us in all means and ways, which included good-will, love and concern for others. Therefore, we should not overlook its qualities and practice. It has profound and subtle meanings in itself. With a lot of practice, it can lead to other wholesome minds. It will overcome greediness, jealousy, miserliness, selfishness, etc.

The word charity can be said to be a kind of *dāna*. For a true bodhisatta his *dāna* practices would reach to the highest level of even relinquished his life for others. Why is there more ordinary and poor people than rich and prosperous people? Because very few people appreciate the practice. Therefore, it is very important to know the teaching of *dāna* by the Buddha. If we contemplate the trade war between U.S. and China can be seen the negative mental states of politicians and economists. It based on negative or unwholesome mental states of greediness, selfishness, envy, stinginess, ill-will, not concerning for others. All these negative minds lead to dispute and conflict. These were mentioned in the following two suttas; DN21: *Sakkapañha* sutta and MN18: *Madhupiṇḍika* Sutta.

In DN21, the map reads like this:

craving, conceit, wrong view (tañhā, māna, diṭṭhi = papañca) → thinking → desire → dear and not dear → envy and stinginess → rivalry and hostility

In the DN15: Mahānidāna Sutta, the Buddha described the human problems and conflicts as follows:

Dependent on craving (greed) → seeking → acquisition → ascertainment → desire and passion → attachment → possessiveness → stinginess → defensiveness → various evil, unskillful phenomena come into play: the taking up of sticks and knives; conflicts, quarrels, and disputes, accusations, divisive speech, and lies.

So, dāna practice is an antidote for craving(greed) which is the cause of sufferings. Therefore, giving, generosity and relinquishing are noble quality which is benefiting to oneself others and other people. In order to make dāna practice more effective, we should have the knowledge about it from the texts. Here I cannot write it in details and only some of them for practical purpose. In the Book of the Eight of Aṅguttara Nikāya had two suttas on Dāna. These are:

Sutta 31: Dāna with eight motives (AN. 8.31 / 4. Dānavaggo 1. Paṭhamadānasuttaṃ)

- 1) Giving to someone when one has an opportunity (someone arrives).
- 2) Out of fear (e.g., to a mafia gang, bandits, etc.).
- 3) Giving to someone who gave oneself before.
- 4) Giving with expecting something (include greed).
- 5) Giving is good (for merits).
- 6) Giving with sympathy to someone (people who are in misfortune and poor).
- 7) For a reputation (giving with tañhā, māna and diṭṭhi).
- 8) Giving for developing one's mind (i.e., sīla, samādhi and paññā or Nibbāna).

All the above motives were explained by Yaw Sayadaw in one of his talks on dāna. Not all of the above offerings are wholesome giving. It seemed to be the Buddha continued the sutta (AN. 8.32 / 2. Dutiyadānasuttaṃ) with the following verses; faith, moral shame (hiri), wholesome giving were the three qualities (i.e., saddhā, sīla and dāna) followed by good people. These were the divine path to Heaven after death. Here faith means belief in the Buddha's wisdom and law of kamma.

Sutta 33: Eight causes for Dāna (grounds) (AN. 8.33 / 3. Dānavatthusuttaṃ)

1. Giving with desire.
2. Giving with hatred.
3. Giving with delusion.
4. Giving with fear.
5. Giving according to one's family tradition or custom (e.g., some families offer foods and rice to monks every morning in Theravadin Buddhist countries).
6. For good rebirths (human and heavenly worlds).
7. Making one's mind with joy and happiness by giving.
8. For developing one's mind by giving (support for the ending of dukkha).

There are four kinds of donor:

1. One gives alone and never encourages people.
The result is attaining wealth and fortune but no followers (family members, friends and servants, etc.).
2. One is not giving but encouraging people for dāna.
The result is having followers but no wealth.
3. One is not giving and without encouraging others.
The result is becoming a destitute person (poor and lonely, e.g., beggar).
4. One practices dāna and also encourages others.
The result is attaining wealth and followers. (e.g., collective dāna, such as Kaṭhina robes ceremony. This kind of dāna was praised by the Buddha).

There are three important mental states which have to be developed by every donor's connection with any dāna. Before the offerings (preparation), one should have the gladdened mind (e.g., reflection on dāna as chances for doing goodness which the bodhisattas, noble people, sages and wise men were pursued) During the actual offerings, the mind should not be in restlessness but with mindfulness and pleasure. After the offering, one also has to take pleasure and joy about by reflection or reviewing on the merit (because one has conquered greed by following the way of wise and noble beings) There were ten reflections taught by the Buddha in some suttas. One of them was cāgānussati—reflection on one's generosity or dāna which could lead to Samādhi (e.g., AN.6.10 Mahānāmasuttaṃ). The donors also can easily develop joy and pleasure by contemplation on the results and benefits gain by the recipients (e.g., giving foods and drinks to starving people or refugees).

Ledi Sayadaw wrote a booklet on dāna explained its meanings and results.

This was called Dānādi Dīpanī with the mātikā (outline) of Dāna, its meanings and results. I will quote only some of them for general readers.

1. Amisa dāna and Dhamma dāna

Giving things and giving Dhamma

It should not include harmful things such as, alcohols, drugs, poisons, arms, cigarettes, etc. Dhamma here is referring to the Buddha Dhamma in books, CDs and in other forms. The most important point on Dhamma is that it must be a real Dhamma of the Buddha without distorted his teachings. This is the Buddha's knowledge and wisdom teaching which is the highest and noblest education. It transcends time and space, racism, nationalism, colour and cultural backgrounds which are man-made. So, it is universal in nature (universal truth). Today the world is urgently in need for this knowledge which can save human race from dangers and destruction.

Giving things gives the results of wealth, fortune and other things. Wealth can be harmful to oneself and others and to nature if we cannot use it properly and wisely. Giving Buddha Dhamma can help humans become moral, virtuous, intelligent and wise. It can train humans to become true humans and how to solve and correct human's behaviour and conduct; and social problems, starting from family life to international levels; transcending all dukkhas on the highest and noblest level.

Therefore, it is a priceless treasure, and the Buddha said that Dhamma dāna was the best gift in all everyone could receive.

2. Giving dāna by oneself and asking for someone to do it on behalf of for oneself

The results are; superior and inferior results respectively

In DN23: Pāyāsi Sutta Prince Pāyāsi asked the young Brahmin Uttara helping him for his own dāna. So, Uttara was put in charge of the dāna distribution.

After both of them passed away, Prince Pāyāsi was reborn in the empty Serīsaka mansion in the company of the Four Great Kings. Uttara was in a good place, the Heaven of the Thirty-Three Gods.

3. Thāvara dāna and Athāvara dāna

stable gift and Unstable gift

Building of Buddha images, cetiyas, bridges, etc., are long-lasting gifts.

Offering of foods, drinks, robes, etc., are not lasting long gift.

The results are; stable and unstable.

Offering rice and foods to the monks every day in the morning is niccabhatta dāna and singular to thāvara dāna. The merits of thāvara dāna are like a flowing river and it flows day and night.

4. Nicca dāna and Anicca dāna

Giving constantly and only sometimes

Someone had constant dāna like a sotāpanna who was stable for good rebirth (sugati). It was mentioned in AN (Aṅguttara N.). Therefore, a human being should have one of the nicca or thāvara dānas. It is a wholesome habitual kamma.

5. Jāna dāna and Ajāna dāna

Giving by understanding about the result and without it.

The results are: when receive the result, becoming a person with wholesome roots (non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion—tihetuka), with sharp knowledge, and one can realize Nibbāna with practice. Without understanding, if one will become a person, he will be with two wholesome roots (without non-delusion), weaken in knowledge (ñāṇa).

6. Vivaṭṭa dāna and vaṭṭa dāna

Giving for the supramundane happiness (i.e., Nibbāna) and mundane happiness (i.e., worldly happiness).

Vivaṭṭa dāna is called perfection of giving (dāna pāramī)

It will lead to human happiness, celestial happiness and Nibbānic happiness.

Vaṭṭa dāna is not dāna pāramī. It will lead to human and celestial only, attaining worldly happiness and without Nibbāna. Therefore, every Buddhist if they make dāna always with the desire of ending dukkha.

7. Ajjhattika dāna and Bāhira dāna

Giving one's life and bodily parts and outside things

The first dāna can save people's lives, so it is noble. This can be done when someone is still alive and after death (i.e., donate the body to hospitals).

8. Vatthu dāna, Abhaya dāna and Dhamma dāna

Giving things, saving someone's life or properties, and teaching Dhamma

9. Sāvajja dāna and Anavajja dāna

Giving meat by killing animal (fish, chicken, cow, etc.) and giving things which never harm others.

The results: Sāvajja dāna can give the result of internal and external dangers, can be lost one's life for wealth and fortunes. Therefore, we should abstain from any dāna harming oneself or others.

Understand of dāna is very important for how to do the right thing and in the right ways for better results to oneself and others.

Dāna practice is quite important for common people (worldlings) in the round of existence (saṃsāra). Sīla practice is also the same. It supports the beings in saṃsāra for good rebirths, wealth and security. It becomes decisive support condition for Nibbāna if practice rightly, properly and wisely (upanissaya paccaya). Therefore, it is a blessing for existence and ending of dukkha. Everyone desires for wealth and fortunes but not many can fulfill their desire and wishes. Very rich and super rich persons are very rare indeed. Why is that? Because man does not know the main cause for what the wealth and fortunes come from. People know only the supporting causes which are external. They do not know about the internal causes which are the more important ones. Even some external causes depend on them. These are kamma (past and present), effort and knowledge (intelligent and wise). Dāna (all kind of wholesome dāna) is the main cause for wealth and fortunes.

There are two kinds of rich people, i.e., richest and super-richest. For richest wealth and fortunes, external causes are possible (it even still more or less has to depend on past kamma, i.e., having merits in the past; on the four wheels discourse, AN. 4.31 Cakkasuttaṃ). We can find these richest men at the Buddha's time and modern day (e.g., Anāthapiṇḍika and Bill Gate). For super-richest people, it mostly has to depend on past kamma (e.g., in the Buddha's time, there were five super-richest persons, i.e., Jotika, Jatila, Mendaka, Punna and Kākavaliya). You cannot find the super-richest person in these days. There is worldly happiness which is wholesome and blameless. We can enjoy them but should not get lost in it.

There is also spiritual happiness which transcending of dukkha. So, the Buddha was not a pessimist but a great optimist. He penetrated all kinds of happiness clearly and thoroughly. Worldly happiness is inferior and not to last long when not using and enjoying it properly and wisely; it can lead to a lot of suffering for oneself and

others. Therefore, the Buddha taught the way to the true and great happiness (i.e., Nibbāna). Worldly happiness is connected with craving, greed and clinging which always lead to birth, ageing, sickness and death. Every Buddha should practice dāna and other wholesomeness always with the intention and wish of transcending dukkha.

In the following I want to describe the power of kamma on great faith (saddhā) and generosity (cāga). It was connected to the five super-richest people in the time of Buddha Gautama. All of them were in Aṅga and Magadha regions both be longed to king Bimbisāra. They were; 1. Jotika 2. Jatila 3. Mendaka 4. Punna and 5. Kākavaliya

1. Jotika: Born into a rich family in Rājagaha. He owned a stately mansion with seven tiered pinnacles. It was surrounded by seven walls, each of which had an entrance guarded by celestial demons (yakkhas). According to the story it was built with the help of Sakka—king of the gods and decorated with gold and jewels.

The fame of his wealth spread to far and wide and became a tourist spot. All his wealth and fortunes were the results of his past generosity. It connected to two of his past lives. The first one was he and his elder brother offered sugar cane juice to many Pacceka-buddhas. He made the wish of enjoying the result of merit and at last realized Nibbāna. His elder brother only made the wish of realization of Nibbāna. After death, both of them were born in heaven. Next life both of them were born into a rich family by the names of Sena and Aparājita at the time of Buddha Vipassi. The elder brother Sena entered the monastic order after listening to the Buddha Vipassi's teaching and became an arahant. Aparājita asked his brother what he had to do with his wealth. Ven. Sena asked him to build a perfume chamber for the Buddha. He built it with gold and jewels spreading around in and outside the chamber. The lesson here is merit made by taṇhā prolonging dukkha in saṃsāra.

Because of his strong faith and generosity, he gained his wealth in his last life as Jotika. After Ajātasattu became king, the king tried to take his mansion by force but did not success (celestial demons protected the place). At last, he ordained as a monk and became arahant.

2. Jatila: After Buddha Kassapa passed away, an arahant went around for donations to build a stupa (made of gold) to enshrine the relics (sarīra) of the Buddha. The arahant came to the house of a goldsmith (past life of Jatila). At that time, the goldsmith and his wife were engaged in a heated quarrel. The goldsmith shouted to the arahant by saying as throwing the stupa into the river and went away. The wife warned him of his seriousness of the wrong speech. So, the goldsmith realized his mistake and wanted to make the atonement for it. Therefore, he made some gold

flowers, put them into three gold pots and offered them to put into the relics chamber of the stupa of the Buddha. The goldsmith had three sons and only the youngest son helping him to make the gold flowers and pots.

In this last life as Jatila he was born from a rich man's daughter who had an illicit love affair. She put the baby into a pot and floated it down the river stream. (the result of his unwholesome speech in the past life). A young woman was bathing in the stream found it and adopted the boy as her son. Later she sent him to Taxila for education where Jatila stayed at the house of a merchant. In due course he married the daughter of the merchant. After the marriage, a large mound of gold appeared at the backyard of their new house (the result of offered gold to relic chamber). Three sons were born to the couple. Before becoming a monk, he wanted to inherit his wealth to the sons and made a test for them. He gave them a mattock and asked them to dig the gold mound. Only the youngest son could dig the gold mound like a clay mound (the result of helping the goldsmith in his past life to make the gold flowers and pots. These three sons were related to the three sons of the goldsmith). Jatila became an arahant within a few days.

3. Mendaka: He was a super-rich man. According to his family life, numerous life-size gold statues of goats appeared in his backyard. There were five persons in their family, with his wife, son daughter-in-law and the slave—Punna. Each person possessed miraculous quality related to their past merits. The rice pot used by his wife was later found to be miraculously filled up again. The granaries were also filled up in this way. Mendaka's son (i.e. Visākhā's father) had a money pouch which was filled with 1,000 coins and never out of cash by miraculously filling up again.

The results of these came from two merits connected with their past lives. Once he was a rich man (Mendaka's past) in Bārāṇasī, there was a famine throughout the region. One day, they had cooked a meal just enough for the family members. A Pacceka-buddha stood at their door for alms food. They offer all the food to him.

Another was during the time, Buddha Vipassī he donated a monastery for the Buddha and a big sālā completed with platform for teaching. After the completion of these building, he gave foods to the Buddha and the Saṅgha for four months.

4. and 5. Punna and Kākavaliya

Here will only mentioned Punna, because the wife of Kākavaliya only helping the two deities to pass the news to the other (a service). Both of them granted her a lot of gold buried under their trees. Both families were poor people and the workers for rich people, and not like the others mentioned above.

One day Punna was working in a field and Ven. Sāriputta came to his place for alms round. On that morning he had arisen from the highest meditation attainment called *nirodha-samāpatti*. He offered a tooth wood and water for him to brush his teeth. Brushing his teeth Sāriputta continued his alms round and on the way, he met Punna's wife who sent foods to her husband. With strong faith and generosity, she offered all the foods to Sāriputta. And then she went back home again cooked foods for Punna. Therefore, on that day both of them ate their foods very late. After the meal they took for a nap. After the rest Punna went to the field and continued his ploughing. To his surprise, all the earth has already miraculously turned into lumps of gold.

All these miracles happened by wholesome power of the mind actions (*Kammas*) and merits. But some people (i.e., materialists, scientists and philosophers) will not accept these kinds of miraculous things because these are out of their knowledge. Actually, most human beings (except true and saintly Buddhists) do not know about the nature of the mind and its power (still there are very few people). By reading the *Nikāya* we can know more about the other richest lay followers of the Buddha and how they used their wealth for others. Just thinking about making money without sharing it with people in need, it just becomes greedier and more selfish. Only the wise and intelligent people know how to use the money and wealth (including power). Therefore, giving is a true blessing for oneself and others.

This is on *dāna* practice. In all world, great religions have *dāna* practice. Mostly *dāna* is a blessing for the giver, but not all of them. For example, if someone offered liquor and drugs to drunkards and drug addicts.

Dāna practice is the way of progress in this life and for the future to come. There were many stories in the time of the Buddha and modern-day stories. There are many ways of giving. The best way of giving is with understanding and knowledge. There was a sutta in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, *On Giving*. The discourse discusses the possible motivations for generosity, and rates in ascending order the results they can lead to. It is interesting to mention here.

Once Ven. Sāriputta, with a large number of lay followers, went to see the Buddha for a Dhamma talk. Ven. Sāriputta said to the Buddha; "Might there be the case where a person gives the gift of a certain sort, and it doesn't bear great fruit or a great benefit, whereas another person gives a gift of the same sort and it bears great fruit and great benefits." The Buddha answered as it was right. Then Ven. Sāriputta asked the Buddha the cause and reason for this. He answered him the seven kinds of motivations and their results.

(1) Having given the gift seeking his profit, with a mind attached to the reward, seeking to store up for himself, with the thought of enjoying it after death. After death, born in the company of the Four Great Kings Heaven (Cātummahārājika), from here after death, return to this world.

(2) Someone gives a gift with the thought giving is good” on the break-up of the body, after death born in the company of the devas of the 33 Heaven (Tāvatiṃsa), from here after death return to this world.

(3) Someone gives a gift with the thought “This was given in the past, done in the past, by my father and grandfather. It would not be right for me to let this old family custom be discontinued”. After death born in the company of the devas of the Hours Heaven (Yāma), from here after death return to this world.

(4) Someone gives a gift with the thought “I am well off. These are not well off. It would not be right for me, being well-off, not give a gift to those who are not well off.” After death born in the company of the contented devas (Tusita Heaven) from here after death return to this world.

(5) Someone gives a gift with the thought “Just as there were the great sacrifices of the sages of the past—Aṭṭhaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva.... etc. In the same way, will this be my distribution of gifts,” after death born in the company of the devas who delight in creation (Nimmānarati Heaven), from here after death coming back to this world?

(6) Someone gives a gift with the thought “When this gift of mine is given; it makes the mind serene. gratification and joy arise.” After death born in the company of devas who has power over the creations of others (Paranimmitavasavattin Heaven). From here after death come back to this world.

(7) Someone gives a gift with the thought “This is an ornament for the mind, a support for the mind.” After death born in the company of Brahma’s Retinue (the lowest of the first jhāna plane). Then, having exhausted his kamma, he is a non-returner. He doesn’t come back to this world.

The commentary explained the 7th giver as giving with the enrichment of samatha-vipassanā practices. There are also some givings not become dāna practices; such as giving to someone for fear (e.g., mafia gang), giving by expecting something (e.g., bribery), giving with rāga (sexual desire), etc. Giving is not an easy thing to do; you have to make an effort. Why is that? Because every living being more or less has

lobha(greed) and self-view. Greed of covetousness, confiscation, clinging with craving, etc. all these make dāna difficult to perform.

Therefore, we have to make an effort to do it. But we will be sure to perform it if we know and understand the benefit and value of dāna or know about them. Even we can give up things too valuable for us, as an example, the dāna pāramī of a Bodhisatta.

There was a very touching story to the heart at the time of the Buddha. It represented an unselfish nature and right motivation of a dāna. Also, it gave immediate results in the present life. It was about Ven. Mahākaccāna and a poor lady. He was the foremost disciple in the detailed exposition of brief sayings, and a native of Avanti, to the far south-west of the Ganges basin. King of Avanti, Caṇḍa Pajjota heard about the Buddha and sent Mahākaccāna and others to invite the Buddha.

After they listened to his talk and became monks. Later they became arahants and went back to Avanti to see the king. On the way back they went for alms-round in a village and did not get anything. There was a young lady, who became very poor then and knew about it. She was a rich man's daughter and had strong saddhā (faith) before, she had a beautiful, long, and shining black hair. There was another rich man's daughter who wanted to buy her hair and paid 1000 coins for it. This happened sometimes ago, but this poor lady did not sell it. This time she urgently needed the money to prepare the meal for the monks.

Therefore, she cut her beautiful long hair and sent the maid to sell it to the rich lady. The rich lady only gave eight coins for it instead of giving the 1000 coins this time. The maid became very sad and cried. The poor lady prepared the meal for the monks, and each monk received one-coin value of food (the monk's number were eight). When the monks were receiving the meal, the poor lady did not dare to come out to meet the monks. In the past, the beauty of a woman was long, soft, shining black hair.

But Ven. Mahākaccāna knew all these things and invited the lady to come out. She came out, and as soon as bowing to the monks, her hairs were growing back to normal. Scientists will take it as supernatural. No, this is super normal, and it is by the mind or mental laws, cause and effect. Insects, birds, jets, airplanes, etc. can fly, but scientists cannot fly in the air. It already has been mentioned an episode connecting with Ven. Mahākaccāna above before. (the commentary to AN 1: Chap.14, Etadagga Vagga)

A lay-man, Soreyya had an evil thought and changed into a woman. There were two

main causes, including in these two episodes, internal and external ones. More important is the internal ones. The mind of the lady and Soreyya; and the purified hearts of the arahants. (DhA. I. 324ff) If we can accept the atomic power, this is not difficult to understand. The mind is more powerful than matter. Therefore, all human beings especially someone who has power (political leaders, governments), wealth (tycoons, business people, business corporations), scientists, etc., should know how to use their mind properly and wisely for the benefit of the human race, not to harm them and destroy the Earth.

Ven. Mahākaccāna went to see the king, and he told the king the episode. Therefore, the king took the poor lady as his consort. With strong saddhā (faith) and volition (cetanā), then the result is greater.

On one occasion the Buddha was staying near Vesāli, in the Great Forest, at the Gabled Pavilion. General Sīha went to the Buddha and asked him as it was possible to point out the fruit of giving visible in the here and now (AN. 5.34 Sīhasenāpatisuttaṃ or A. iii. 38f; iv. 79f). The Buddha answered in positive and gave five results of it. These are:

(1) One who gives, who is a master of giving, is dear and charming to people at large. We can see this kind of giver in the past and present.

(2) Furthermore, good people, people of integrity, admire one, who gives who is a master of giving: this too is the fruit of giving visible in here and now. The people mentioned here are moral and virtuous people; sages and noble beings (ariyas). Therefore, the giver has the chances to close and near them. On learning their teachings gain knowledge. He will live the wholesome and progressive life, towards the noble direction, and even he can end dukkha. We can see this kind of giver in Buddha's time and present Theravadin countries.

(3) Furthermore, the fine reputation of one who gives, a master of giving is spread far and wide: this too is a fruit of giving visible in here and now.

(4) Furthermore, when one who gives, a master of giving, approaching by the assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/ she does so confidently and without embarrassment: this too is a fruit of giving visible in here and now. These results of (1) to (4) are visible in here and now.

(5) Furthermore, at the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, the master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world: that is a fruit of giving in the next life.

When these five results of giving were mentioned to General Sīha: he replied the Buddha that the four fruits of giving (from (1) to (4)) visible in here and now were not by faith (saddhā) in him. He knew it with experiences because he was a master of giving. But the last fruit, after death, reappeared in a good destination, the heavenly world, he did not know, that was he believed in the Buddha by conviction (saddhā). Some people are not giving to others, but they spend it themselves. Even worse than these are people not only not give to others but also not spend by themselves.

Even the worst of all are encouraging people not to give. There was once a very wealthy man named Ānanda in Sāvattihī. He was a miserly man and encouraged his son Mūlasiri not to give. This rich man had five pots of gold buried in his house and died without revealing its location to anyone. He was reborn in a village of beggars not far from Sāvattihī. From the time when his mother was pregnant, all beggars in the village had difficulties in begging. They thought there must be a wicked and unfortunate person among them.

By dividing themselves up in groups with the process of elimination. They found out the pregnant woman, and she was driven out of the village. A son was born to her, and he was very ugly and repulsive. If she went out alone by begging and got something. And with the boy got nothing. So, when the boy could go out by himself for begging, and she left her son. He wandered alone in Sāvattihī for begging and remembered his past life and old home. After arriving there, he went straight into the house. When the children of Mūlasiri saw him, they were frightened and crying. The servants beat him and threw him out of the house.

The Buddha was on his alms-round and saw the incident. Then the Buddha told Mūlasiri that the ugly young beggar was his father of previous life. He did not believe it. Therefore, the Buddha asked the beggar to show them the buried gold. And Mūlasiri became a lay disciple. Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follow:

Verse 62: “I have sons and wealth; with this, the fool is afflicted.

Indeed, he is not his own, how can sons and wealth be his.”

(From the Dhammapada: The Fool.)

The above story warning us a very important lesson; wrong view, unwholesome mental states, thoughts, and actions gave miserable sufferings to beings. Even the negative energies effect on others. Why nowadays humans have a lot of problems and sufferings than before? We need to contemplate and find out the causes to correct it. There was also another interesting story on giving in the time of the Buddha.

The story of a childless rich man:

On one occasion, King Pasenadi went to see the Buddha. He told the Buddha about a rich man who had died in Sāvattthī without leaving heirs. Therefore, he had to confiscate all the man's properties. This man was very rich and stingy. While he was alive and did not give anything in charity. And even was reluctant to spend his money on himself. So, he ate very sparingly and wore cheap and coarse clothes. Then the Buddha told the king and audience about this rich man and one of his past lives. At that time also he was a rich man.

One day, when a Solitary-Buddha came and stood for alms at his house. He was on his way out that asked his wife to offer foods to the Solitary-Buddha and left. It was very rare that her husband gave his permission to give things to someone. So, she filled up the alms bowl with choice foods. The rich man again met the Solitary-Buddha on his way back home and looked into his alms-bowl. And found out that his wife had offered a lot of good foods.

So, he thought that this monk would only have a good sleep after a good meal. It would have been better if the servants were given such good foods because they would give him better service. He has regretted to ask his wife to offer foods to the Pacceka-buddha. There was also another incident connecting with him. He had a brother and who was also rich. The brother had an only son. Coveting his brother's wealth and killed his young nephew and wrongfully inherited his brother's wealth. Because the man had offered alms foods to the Pacceka-buddha that he became a very rich man in his present life. He regretted having offered foods to the Solitary-Buddha that no wishes to spend anything even on himself.

Because he had killed his nephew for the sake of wealth that he had suffered in hells for seven existences. This evil kamma having come to an end and he was born in this life as a rich man. But here also he had not gained any wholesome actions. After hearing the story, the king remarked; "Ven. Sir! Even though he had lived here in the lifetime of the Buddha himself, he had not made any offering of anything to the Buddha or his saṅgha. Indeed, he had missed a very good opportunity and had been very foolish."

Then the Buddha spoke the following verse:

Verse 355: "Wealth destroys the foolish, but it can't destroy those who seek the other shore (Nibbāna).

By his craving for wealth, the fool destroys himself and would destroy others.”

(From the Dhammapada: Craving).

What do we learn from this story and teaching? It taught us the importance of the mind. Even we cannot think about foolish and stupid things which most people are thinking all the times.

Also, it reminds us of the first and second verses of the Dhammapada; The Pairs. Even we are doing good things should not let unwholesome mental states come in between them. We have already discussed the possible motivations for generosity (dāna). It should be like the sixth number giver, giving with joy and happiness before, during, and after the charity.

The-pye-kan Sayadaw commented on these two stories. These rich men were like the alchemist's billows, which breathing in and out, but without life. Therefore, they were dead people. How many dead politicians and wealthy men in the world today? Most of them are fighting for power and wealth. Not for the welfare of the human race and the mother Earth. We can see them clearly in today situations of the world. Temperature is rising every year and getting hotter and hotter. We are killing animals in a very cruel way. One way of eating them is roasting meat.

Now the sun is roasting human skin if human beings are continuing doing foolish, silly, and stupid things, the sun will roast our flesh. Talking about dāna will never end. So, here will do a general contemplation on its subject. The Buddha's teachings are wisdom teachings or wisdom education. Wisdom has the qualities of deep, profound wide, and immeasurable. If you can only see it superficially, then it is superficial. Like the Buddha's wisdom, then it is immeasurable.

We study, research, and practice the Buddha's teaching is inheriting his wisdom. As a human being, this task is precious and priceless. And not like all the others worldly knowledge and educations which if we human begins cannot use it wisely and properly, can create great sufferings and disasters. Dāna subject is one of the very basic teachings of the Buddha. So, we can find them a lot in the Pāli suttas. Most people will think, including many Buddhists, the Buddha's teachings are not concerning with worldly matters and human societies.

If we research the Pāli Suttas, we can find out that this Great man (the greatest of all) was a human being, born on this Earth by a woman, and living on this earth; after his great enlightenment, and teaching living beings (mostly humans) for 45 years without

rest. He was not living in heavens and talking to super beings liked bodhisattas, deities, divines, etc. As a human being and living on this Earth and if not talking to humans whom he had to communicate? He was talking to all walks of life, from lower to higher caste, and from beggars to the kings. Therefore, he had to talk about men, societies, and human problems and how to deal with them. If he did not have the deep, profound, and immeasurable wisdom and how could he help them.

In the ten perfections (pāramīs), dāna pāramī is the first one to come. It has three levels in each pāramī. The lower, middle, and higher levels, respectively; in Pāli—pāramī, upa-pāramī, and paramattha-pāramī. Except for one's bodily part, giving outside properties, such as wife, children, wealth, etc. are an ordinary one. Giving up one's bodily parts, such as eye, kidney, etc. is upa-pāramī. It can be counted only when one is still alive. Maybe not after death; such as donate one's body.

Even after death, donate one's body is not many people can do it. We can see how strong wrong view and craving (diṭṭhi-taṇhā) is—this is me, and this is mine. After death, donate one's body is quite a noble thing to do. Because it can save some one's life or vision (i.e., for an eye), etc. Therefore, dāna—giving practice is not very easy for everyone, especially someone has strong diṭṭhi-taṇhā. It needs to put a lot of effort. So, we need to know the benefits of dāna very clear and easier to let go of our attachments to outside things.

For a true bodhisatta follows the ways of becoming a future Buddha, even to give up his own life is not difficult—paramattha dāna pāramī. Can we recognize, or know a true/real bodhisatta among humans. Nowadays we have a lot of self-declared bodhisattas. In the Majjhima Nikāya, we found about two bodhisattas in two suttas, Ghaṭikāra and Dakkhiṇā-vibhaṅga Suttas. In the Ghaṭikāra Sutta, it mentioned about Gautama bodhisatta as Jotipāla young brahman in the time of Kassapa Buddha. Jotipāla—the Gautama bodhisatta even did not know himself as a true bodhisatta.

In the beginning, he did not want to meet the Kassapa Buddha. In the second sutta, it mentioned about the Metteyya bodhisatta of the future Buddha. Bhikkhu Ajita was the Metteyya bodhisatta and had supernatural powers. He got the robes offered by the Buddha's foster mother Mahāpajāpati Gotamī bhikkhunī. Many monks there did not know he was the Metteyya bodhisatta. (Metteyya bodhisatta was not in the original sutta. I had heard about it from a talk by a monk).

For a real bodhisatta, even if he knows it himself will not declare about it. People have very deep-rooted diṭṭhi/taṇhā that is even doing wholesome things always calculate loss and profit. Therefore, the results of merits are mostly mixed ones. Not always good in the beginning, in the middle and the end. We had seen the extreme

self-views of nationalism, fascism and racism, which had done a lot of atrocities during the second world war.

They were not only harming others but also leading to their sufferings in the end. Even some were not wanting to say sorry or asking forgiveness out of conceit. They would never heal their wounds. In the Noble Eightfold Path; The Buddha arranged Right View—Sammā-diṭṭhi in the beginning. Why is that? Because it is the wisdom factor and the most important one in human knowledge. Even, the intention is good without the right view, the results usually follow unsatisfactorily. With the right view and right thinking will be followed. With the right thinking or thought, then the right speech and right action would be followed respectively. These are causes and effects relationship. The right view has two kinds; worldly and spiritual. Without worldly right views cannot develop spiritual right view. The most fundamental worldly right view is the belief in the law of kamma.

Every human happiness, peace, and prosperity based on this very important fundamental law. It is not making by humans. It is the law of nature; a truth. The sun is rising in the east and set in the west. We can express the laws of kamma in a simple slogan “Action begets reaction”—Wholesome actions beget wholesome results; unwholesome actions beget unwholesome results. The law of karma is deep, profound, and complex. One of the four inconceivable phenomena that are not to be conjectured about—the mechanism and precise working out of the results of kamma.

To become a Buddhist, at least has faith in the law of kamma. Therefore, whatever kind of action we made, it will bear fruit and never wasted and will give the result sooner or later. Another one very important point needs to contemplate is why are we coming to this human world? We were not sent here by God, or without reasons. One of your past good karmas sent you to here—cause and effect relationship. After born as a human being, what do you want to do? Most people will think indulgence in sensual pleasures or seeking sensual pleasures—including politicians, economists, scientists, and highly educated people.

Very few people are thinking about the welfare of oneself and others. Just looking at nowadays the world situations, the internal and external ones. The Buddha taught us very clearly. By protecting ourselves, and we protect others, and vice versa. To achieve this inspiration, the human has to do goods. For wanting to do goods, a human should have right view, right thinking and has ethical standards and values for actions. The human world is the great field of merits which other realms of existence do not have.

Therefore, a Buddha will always arise in the human world. A true bodhisatta only has

the chances to develop his ten perfections (pāramīs) in this world. So, every human should take these chances to do goods for developing the perfections. Not comes here as a human to harm oneself and others. We should not do stupid and foolish things by wasting our times as a precious human. After that, we will go back to our frequent homes—the four woeful planes (apāya-bhūmi).

Developing the ten perfections is a noble sacrifice. So, if we give up a little happiness; we will have more and more happiness. Therefore, dāna practice is a very wholesome action creates happiness here and after (see the answers the Buddha gave to General Siha, the faith of giving). We can protect our wealth from fire, flood, kings(governments), thieves, or hateful heirs by giving. If we die cannot take any wealth and properties with us—come naked, go naked.

So, do not become a naked ascetic. Therefore, using our wealth, intelligence, skills, etc. by doing all kinds of goodness and we should take all the wholesome kammās with us. This is called wholesome kammic bank account. This kind of bank account following you like a shadow as mentioned by the Buddha in the second verse of Dhammapada:

“All mental phenomena have mind as their forerunner; they have mind as their chief; they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.”

A human bank account cannot be safe; it still has outside dangers and only last for this life. The wholesome kammic bank account has more increments, and you will have it until your last life in Saṃsāra (the round of rebirths), and every deposit has the seven mind moments of increments. Only this kind of person is the richest man in the world and a true super-billionaire. Humans do not have these kammic bank deposits and accounts, and then all are naked ascetics—came naked and will go naked. Then their most possible existences are in the woeful and miserable planes.

The most pitiful man will be the naked billionaire (Because he has the best chance for doing good). In Buddha’s time and our time, there were some stories about people who were very rich and became richer and richer. Not because they were stingy and only making money. Because they had done a lot of merits in their past lives and continued to do more and more in this life. I have already mentioned some of them in the 5th blessing—Having made merits in the past. So, wealth and fortunes come from the results of giving, and not by stingy, envy and avarice. It is also one way of practice to conquer taṇhā—craving, greed, or reducing it. Wealth is like burning charcoal if you are clinging to it and become more suffering. By letting go of it have peace and happiness. The Buddha mentioned the five wholesome dhammas in many

suttas. These are saddhā, sīla, suta, cāga and paññā—conviction, virtue, learning, generosity, and discernment.

These are also called noble growth. These dhammas have the power of fulfilling one's wishes. Instead of relying on outside power, Buddhists should develop them. Dāna or cāga is one of them. Dāna is; the act of giving and gift. Cāga is; giving up and generosity. Caraṇa is good to conduct. These three Pāli words have a close relationship. Dāna—giving and gifts are many ways. Giving one's time and energy for any wholesome matters to others also include in it.

Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti—The gift of Dhamma is greater than all other gifts. Because it related to intelligence, knowledge, discernment, or wisdom. Without merits and discernment /wisdom—all beings wandering in the round of existence is very painful. They are also supporting each other. The most important for giving is right and wise motivations.

Give a gift with the thought “This is an ornament for the mind, a support for the mind.” This is giving with the enrichment of samatha-vipassanā practice or wise contemplation. All the merits and wholesome dhammas as the support of ending saṃsāric dukkha or Nibbāna Element. All living beings and non-living beings are parts of the whole nature. We all are related to each other. One affects others, especially human beings.

15. Living in Rectitude

Rectitude is quality or attitude that makes people behave honestly and virtuously. Here is living by the wholesome dhammas, the ten wholesome courses of action. Then kusala dhammas have already mentioned in the 9th blessing—well mastered disciplines. In the world, the best protection is one’s own wholesome dhammas. In the world, why all living beings are quite different from each other.

Please do not say about other types of living beings, even in humans themselves. Because of their views, thinking, and actions are quite different. Not all of them have the same qualities and attitudes. Therefore, living beings are different because of the results of their different kammās. It is interesting to read and contemplate the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta (No.135), in the Majjhima Nikāya (MN 135).

In the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta—The Shorter Analysis of Action; Subha, Todeyya’s son went to see the Buddha. He said to the Blessed One: “Master Gotama, what is the reason, what is the cause, why baseness and excellence are seen along human beings, among the human race? For short-lived and long-lived people are to be seen, sickly and healthy, ugly and beautiful, ineffectual and influential, poor and rich, low-born and high-born, stupid and discerning people to be seen.”

The Buddha answered him: “Subha, beings are owners of their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and have their actions as their arbitrator. Action is what differentiate beings in terms of baseness and excellence.”

Subha did not understand the detailed meanings of them and requested the Buddha to explain in details. There is another discourse on kamma, the Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta (No.136). Kamma and its results are difficult to foresee. The workings of kamma are strange and surprising.

Therefore, the law of action (kamma) is very important for living beings, especially for a human. Law of cause and effect covers all types and kinds of living beings. The man understands it and living accordingly with the wholesome dhammas will become a good person with the wholesome life. This is the way of protecting oneself and others. Then, human existence is beneficial and fruitful. Even, we can say education on law of action is the basic education for man. In the Dīgha Nikāya—Long Discourses of the Buddha, there is a discourse called Lakkaṇa Sutta (Sutta No. 30)—Physical Marks of a Great man.

There, the Buddha mentioned the 32 bodily marks of a great man. Only two persons could have it; a Buddha and a Universal Monarch. But these marks on a Buddha were clearer and distinct than the other. These marks on the Buddha came from the results of meritorious deeds previously cultivated by the bodhisatta for many lives. These acts were the ten pāramīs—perfections. Here, I will mention the first and second marks only, which were connecting the actions (causes) and the results (effects).

The first mark—the lowest part of the feet were full and leveled without any depression. Therefore, the Buddha's footprint was appearing full and completed on the ground. This mark appeared on the body because the bodhisatta cultivated wholesome meritorious deeds with firmness and confidence. Kept his words (never broke the promises), never gave up and in low spirit. Completed with this mark no internal and external enemies (kilesa and beings) and dangers could make him trembled. It gave him the stable results and respected by beings. He had stable sīla, samādhi, and paññā.

The second mark: the Buddha had the wheel symbols on both of the lowest part of the feet. In his many past lives, the bodhisatta was giving himself for the happiness of others. And helping to dispel others' fear and dangers. While he was performing dāna and enriching with other things. As an example, when he was offering a building together with other things such as bed, chairs, table, etc. He was doing every dāna always in this way. Because of this meritorious deed acquired these marks. With this mark and the result was, the Buddha had human followers of four types—bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, laymen and laywomen and other beings—deities, divines (brahma gods), asuras, etc.

Here my emphasis is not for the physical characteristics. The emphasis is on the importance of human's thinking, verbal and physical actions which affect the physical world internally and externally. These things were already mentioned by the Buddha over 2500 years ago. Nowadays scientists also confirm it by experiments and research. For example, they played different kinds of music to the flower plants and observed its changes. The most well-known research for many years was by a Japanese scientist. He was also using different kinds of music, sounds, visual images, letters and words which had good meanings and bad meanings, etc. with water. Later he observed the changes of water crystals under the powerful microscope.

The water crystals were changing accordingly with different sounds and visual images. Wholesome sounds and images created beautiful water crystals. The unwholesome ones created ugly, broken, distorted water crystals which were difficult to see. There was a remarkable documentary film about a Chinese man in the N. E. of China. A middle-aged man from a village in Liao Ning province was craving for snake meat.

He killed them and ate them for some years, maybe also in a very cruel way. One day his body was starting to show illness. His body skin was very itchy and painful. He had to scratch it unbearably all the times. And later he became well known with a nick-name as a snake man.

The news spread to the city, and a group of Buddhists came to see him. They arranged a special ceremony for him to ask forgiveness to the snakes he had harmed and killed. And then they were surrounding and chanting sutras and mantras for him, especially “The Sutra of Earth Store Bodhisattva (Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrvapraṇidhāna Sūtra)”. They performed it for many hours. The Buddhist group did the same ceremony three times separately for a few months. Surprisingly his miserable illness was cured, and the skin color went back to normal, bright, and yellow skin. Before it was dark grey, dry, and ugly.

There was also another amazing documentary film experiment with insects. This was done in Yun-nan Province in Southern China. A farm grower of fruits and vegetables made an experiment liked this. He did not use pesticides and fertilizers in his orchards and vegetable plots. Because he knew the outcomes of these chemicals which harmed humans, animals, insects, and nature. He used only organic farming, but how he protected them from the insects. He was a Buddhist and had strong confidence in the wholesomeness of the mind, good-will, compassion, appreciative joy, and a good heart.

So, he arranged a small piece of land with some fruit trees for the insects to eat. Close by not far from it there was a larger plot of land with fruit trees for sale. The vegetable plots were also arranged in this way. He hung letter cards on fruit trees and vegetable plots to invite the insects to eat and requested them not to disturb the others. Surprisingly it worked; the insects could feel it and not disturb the other fruit trees and vegetable plots, for human consumption.

They left it for the human consumption untouched. It seems to me nowadays with the development of science and technology; some scientists made researches and experiments on the mind and its power. They had some knowledge of it and wrote some books about them. Therefore, human views, thinking, verbal and physical actions affect the physical world and nature internally and externally, which I had already mentioned above. As a human being physical appearance is also important. Who will marry an elephant man or woman? (Referred to the Elephant Man, the movie. This was a true story and there was a book on it. The elephant man’s mother was a beautiful woman.

So, nothing to do with genetic, the kammic result of his past life). Who will use them

in the five stars hotel and restaurant? These are individual matters. For the larger scale effect, it is more important. Connection with societies, the human race, nature, and the mother Earth; it becomes very important. It becomes about human survival. The Earth is becoming more and more polluted, rising temperature (e.g. 50°C in the middle east), ice melting in the north pole, strong hurricanes (e.g. Katrina, Harvey, etc. in U.S.), many typhoons in Asia (e.g. mostly in the Philippines), heavy rains, floods, landslides, forest fires, etc. Even animals and insects are sensitive to nature and aware of the dangers. But human beings are not, even they do not know about themselves. Scientists make a lot of researches and experiments on the external world, but they do not know their minds. Their minds are closer to them than any other things, more than their wives and children. They were born with it, living with it and die with it. Nearly all human problems come from it, but they do not know themselves.

This is ignorance (avijjā). The natural sufferings of birth, aging, and death we cannot escape. The others are humans made, and we can prevent and escape from it. We need to follow the Buddha's wisdom and his teachings. By following the Buddha's wisdom, we can prevent and solve a lot of human-made problems and sufferings. We cannot find anyone on the Earth who will know about Human beings are better than Buddha. After his enlightenment, he talked about them for 45 years all the times. If we know and understand the Buddha's teachings, then we can live our life by the wholesome dhamma. This way of life is living in rectitude and righteousness. This way of life benefits oneself and others, also it protects oneself and others. And after death, no-one will become a naked person (empty person).

This is a real blessing. The Buddha declared it very clear that anyone who practiced the Dhamma; and it would protect him. The Dhamma here was wholesome dhamma—the positive ones and not the unwholesome dhamma, which is the negative one. Still, it comes back to the law of action—cause and effect. Therefore, someone is practicing Dhamma at least has three results.

- (1) You look after and protect yourself from dangers.
- (2) It can bring you happiness.
- (3) After death will not fall into painful existences.

There is a good jātika story for contemplation on these points. This was Dhammapāla Jātaka (No. 447). In ancient time, Sink Country had a village named Dhammapāla. The bodhisatta was also called Dhammapāla (Dhammapāla-kumāra), the son of the village headman. He went to Taxila (Takkasilā) for education. His teacher's son suddenly died at a very young age. Therefore, the family members and the students there were suffered from sorrow, pain, and grief. Dhammapāla saw this

event and became very surprised about it. Because it was not the time for death at this very young age, in his village. He had never been seen and heard them before.

So, he and the other students were in arguing about this matter. This case arrived at his teacher, and he questioned him. Dhammapāla said that in his village nobody died at a young age. All lived up to the full life span. The teacher was very curious about it and decided to make an inquiry in this village. So, he took some animal bones with him to the Dhammapāla village, and met Dhammapāla's father, informed to him that his son died unexpectedly. By hearing it, the people were laughing. Then, the teacher took the animal bones out and showed them for evidence. They instantly responded that it would be the bones of an animal and it not belonged to Dhammapāla. The teacher asked them why they did not believe it and the reasons for long life and long living.

The reasons or causes were:

- (1) They approached the wise, holy men and teachers
- (2) They listened to their teachings.

Any ascetic and teacher came to their village and taught them; they would only take what was good and following it. If something were not good, they did not take it and not criticize them. From these two points, we know that these people were mature. These two factors are similar to the first and second factors of practice leading to stream entry. These are:

- (1) Association with people of integrity
- (2) Listening to the true Dhamma.

Let us observe nowadays, mans, and societies. Do they have the standards and intelligence like Dhammapāla villagers or what the Buddha wanted them to be? Most people approach unwise, ignoble men, and polluted matters or media. What did they learn from these men and stuff? They learnt the wrong views, sex, violence, greed, selfishness, hate, ingratitude, exploitation, meanness, etc. So, most human beings become more and more deluded, and many problems and disasters arise internally and externally.

(3) The Dhammapāla villagers were observing the five precepts very well and practiced accordingly.

(4) They performed generosity as much as they could. They took joy and interest in these performances before, during, and after. This was the proper way of doing merits and also taught by the Buddha.

(5) The villagers were living together in harmony, friendliness, and helping each other.

Therefore, it was a peaceful and happy society. These qualities are now very rare in societies, even in family life. In the past, around a small area, people were known to each other very well. Our neighbors were like family members and helping each other. Nowadays, these things are changing dramatically. Living next door and do not know each other. Regarding others with suspicion and no feelings of security. If we observe and contemplate these five factors and will found that these were had a connection to each other, they are leading to peace, harmony, long life, and happiness.

In the Sakka-pañhā Sutta—Sakka's Questions (No. 21, Dīgha Nikāya, DN 21 Sakkapañha Sutta), Sakka, the deva-king, asked the Buddha as follow: All living beings (here men) wanted to be free from hostility, violence, rivalry, ill-will, free from those who were hostile. These were also meant; long life, healthiness, and happiness. But the beings were not fulfilling these wishes. What were the reasons behind that?

The Buddha answered to this was; beings were fettered with envy, stinginess, and avarice (selfishness), which was why they lived in hostility, violence, rivalry, ill-will and with those who were hostile. These two unwholesome mental states are interesting. It represents lobha and dosa—greed and hate. If we observe and contemplate today world situations, these unwholesome things and matters are happening up to the international levels. (e.g., the unwholesome competition between Russia and U.S. on the weapons of mass destruction; the trade war between China and U.S.; and also U.S. with other countries. Even sports are becoming unwholesome competitions, unlike in the past. It becomes business-like, full of corruptions and gambling.)

In some countries political parties are fighting each other for power and using many dirty tricks, even some superpowers are in this group. They were exploiting the citizens just for their power and greed. If they concern for the country and people no need to fight for power, whoever wins is the same, even have to support the winning party for the welfare of the people. The Buddha also taught people on the important role of political leaders (in ancient time were emperors and kings) and governments.

Bad leaders and governments (i.e., immoral people), their behaviors and acts affect the citizens and nature and leading to dangers, such as drought, famine, wars, and diseases, etc. Regarding these disasters, even the Buddha said that people would not believe him what he had said. This point was not difficult to understand. Even most human beings do not understand themselves. To understand and see these things

which are not within their knowledge. Human knowledge is very limited.

If we observe and contemplate the provinces of economics and sciences/technologies, there are also problems created by some economists and scientists. The main problems are unsustainable economic policies and scientific inventions. The main culprit is craving, greed, over-indulgence (taṇhā) with ignorance or deluded mind, which cannot discern things. These are our greatest enemies, the inner ones. More destructive than any external one, even than natural disasters which are also caused by these enemies.

Greed, hatred, and delusion (wrong views) are the weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and not Saddam Hussein or Gaddafi or Osama bin Laden or other people. They are already inside us or in each one of us. If writing about the current situation on nature, politics, economics and science and technology, and there are a lot of problems in these provinces. If we study, observe and contemplate and can see them very clear.

The Buddha said that the source of suffering was greed — craving (It including hatred for sure, both as the two sides of a coin). Combine with wrong views, and it becomes WMD. But humans take them as their best friends. They are nourishing and developing them in their whole lives. Many years ago, there was a Hollywood movie called “The Man with the X-ray eyes”. The actor was Ray Milland, who was a scientist in it. He was researching a chemical liquid which could be used as the X-ray. After he had found it and used it on himself. He was using it as an eye-drop. What he found out was made him happy and a lot of joy.

He could see men and women naked bodies after using some drops. At the beginning, with desire and craving, he was happy with it. In the long run, it caused a problem and distraction like a drug addict. After sometimes, by using the x-ray eye drops, his eyes were starting showing the signs of degeneration. He could not see naked women anymore and instead of their skeletons. And then later he only saw the bright light. This made him unbearable and ended up destroying his own eyes. There are some important and valuable lessons we can gain from it. The scientist’s motivation was not good.

In the same way some economic policies and scientific researches and inventions were not good. It brought up more problems than solved the problems because these were based on greed and selfishness. There is a lot of envy and avarice going on in politics, economics, and knowledge on science and technology. There is also protectionism on economics and sharing of knowledge. These are the signs of greed and selfishness, which lead to distrust and disharmony among countries, and

problems.

Greed never brings satisfaction and happiness. If greed is greater and greater, it brings more problems and sufferings. It is like a balloon if put in more and more air and it bigger and bigger. With over limit and then it

explodes. We can see the effects of human greed and craving on earth, in societies and nature. Climate changes and the temperature rising is now close to the limits. Therefore, we saw a lot of natural disasters. Hurricane Harvey was a very good example (i.e., happened in America in 2018). And then, we heard and knew some human health problems connecting with food chains which were polluted by chemicals and other pollution (i.e., air, water, etc.).

Now even we heard some news about young girls as young as ten years old had childbirths. Even these kinds of things mentioned by the Buddha a long time ago and difficult to believe it. Now it comes true. It is important to know roughly about our inner enemies of greed, hatred, and delusion (ignorance). If we like something, then it becomes greed and do not like it and becomes hatred (aversion).

So, hatred can be grouped into greed. We do things blindly because we do not know the outcomes of it. This is ignorance or delusion. Greed and hatred go with delusion(ignorance). In the beginning, ignorance is leading to greed or hatred. If we used to it and it becomes a habit, and even knowing the outcome, we cannot stop it. Then we are led by greed or hatred; even we know the outcomes, as an example, someone addicted to drugs.

The Buddha gave a simile (there are many) for greed, craving, and clinging as a drop of honey on the edge of a very sharp razor blade. Sensual pleasures are like this. If we are with a very strong desire to enjoy the pleasant feeling and licking the honey, then we will encounter great suffering. Therefore, restraint of the senses brings peace and happiness to the human race. Overusing it or indulgence with it will burn us like fire. The story of the man with the x-rayed eyes reminded politicians, economists, and scientists how to use their powers and knowledge for the human race.

16. Assistance to One's Relatives

Commentary described relatives as someone's maternal or paternal relations back through seven generations. When these people suffered from loss of wealth and illness and came for help, he should assist them with good, clothes, money, grain and other necessities. (Even they do not come and ask, we should help them if we know.) This blessing is also connected with the blessing of giving (dāna). The results of this blessing is the same as dāna. It is the blessing in this life and next life to come.

In the Khuddaka Nikāya, the 15th text is Cariyā Piṭaka. This text included some of the jātaka stories connection with the practices of the bodhisatta on the ten perfections (pāramīs). How he developed his pāramīs for the welfare of the world, relatives, and himself. Therefore, assistance to one's relatives is one of the cariyās. This protection with blessing is relating to love and compassion (mettā and karuṇā).

Nowadays, men are quite weak in these noble qualities. It seems to be human becomes more cruel and violent to fellow human beings and animals. Even we have seen and heard more and more stories of children's ingratitude to their parents, even in Asian Culture.

Therefore, assistance to one's relatives can be a difficult thing to do, because of lacking mettā-karuṇā. Support for one's parents, assistance to one's wife and children, assistance to one's relatives and others (friends and strangers) are in the three cariyās.

So, these practices are a true blessing for oneself and others. Here assistance to one's relatives is not only included with blood relationship, but also one own people and country. There were many jātaka stories for these points. We only contemplate two of them.

1. The Story of the Bodhisatta Crow:

One time the bodhisatta was born as the leader of crows. One day a crow in the city shat on the head of the brahman who was the king's teacher. He was quite angry and had a grudge on the crow population. Unfortunately for the crows, the king's elephants got the disease. So, the king discussed this matter with the brahman teacher. He had strong ill-will to the crows and wanted to revenge them. And then he told the king that there was a medicine which could cure the disease of the elephants. This was the body oil of the crows. Therefore, the king ordered to kill the crows for

oil.

So, many crows were killed and reduced the numbers of crows. At last, the bodhisatta crow could not neglect this matter anymore. The bodhisatta met the king and explained to him that crows never had oil in their bodies. The reason was that crows were always alert and living their lives with fear and dangers. When we were young as boys, had been eaten crow meat before. But never thinking about this point as crows do not have oil in their body.

Even their bodies do not have much meat and liquid inside them, skinny and dry. At that period there were a lot of crows everywhere. In cities, they were making a lot of noises. Chasing and fighting each other for foods and quite noisy. We could see them in the backyard of houses, around kitchens, searching, and stealing for foods.

Nowadays, we cannot see them anymore (i.e., in Burma). It seems they were extinct from the cities. One of the reasons may be poisoned by men. Now we are in the same fate as men poison men by pesticides, other chemicals, and other pollutants. These are the results of greed and selfishness. In the Sutta Nipāta, there was a discourse called Kāma Sutta—Sensual Pleasure.

The Buddha gave some similes for sensual pleasure/sensuality. One of them was a bird (crow, vulture, hawk, etc.) had a piece of meat (here represented sensuality), and other birds following behind him and tried to get this meat. So, they attacked him with their beaks. If he did not drop it, then it would never end. If he dropped it, then another bird got it. Therefore, the other birds followed this bird again to attack him for the meat.

But the first crow was free from suffering after he let go of the meat. We need to ask the following questions. What about human beings? Do they want to let go off their over-indulgence in sensual pleasure with over craving for making money which will lead to the destruction of the Earth? For human survival, we should contemplate these points very seriously. If not, it will be too late, because of the severe climate changes on the Earth. The price of these is too much for a momentary, fleeting pleasure.

2. A Noble Leader:

This was the story of a monkey king called Mahākapi from a Jātaka story and a past life of the bodhisatta. It was a very touching story. At that time the bodhisatta was born as a monkey leader called Mahākapi. There was a forest at the upstream of the

Ganges River. A big mango tree was at near the bank of the river. It had very delicious mangoes. Therefore, the bodhisatta asked all the monkeys not let any mangoes fell into the water on any branch which stretched out to the river. When the ripe mangoes dropped into the river, they would be carried downstream and found out by human beings. After they ate the fruits, they would follow their trace upstream and found out the tree. It would be a danger for them. Unlucky, once there was a ripe mango covered by red ants and all the monkeys not aware of it. After sometimes it dropped into the river and arrived at the human place. Someone found it and presented it to the king. The taste was very delicious that the king craved for it. He and a group of people followed the river upstream to find the mango tree.

At last, they found it and ate a lot of the mangoes and slept under the tree for a rest. When they were in sleep, the monkeys came and ate the fruits. But some monkeys made noises so that it woke them up. And then they saw the monkeys and tried to catch them.

There was only one way the monkeys could escape. That was crossing to the other bank of the river which side also had some big trees. So, the bodhisatta came in. He selected a strongest and long enough creeper on the mango tree; with his strong force jumped over the river to the other side. From the other side of a tree, he took nearly the same length of creeper jumped back to the mango tree. Here the bodhisatta made a mistake. He forgot to calculate for the length to bind the mango tree. There was not enough time to do it again. So, he bound the end of the creeper on his two legs and with both hands holding to a very strong branch and using his whole body as a bridge. (A bodhisatta was always intelligent and wise; therefore, we can see the importance of wisdom in every aspect of life. Intelligence, but not wise, is not always good.)

All the monkeys trod on his body, with the help of the creeper and arrived on the other side. But there was an evil monkey who was the past life of Devadatta—the Buddha's cousin. He had a strong grudge and hatred on the bodhisatta in a very long distant past which he carried along with him until the bodhisatta's last life. With the evil intention and by force, he jumped on the bodhisatta's back and crossed to the other shore. The bodhisatta heart was broken, and he bore the intense pain with patience.

The king and the others saw the incident with awe and in surprise. They tenderly took the bodhisatta down from the tree. And then, the bodhisatta taught the king to have discernment, love, compassion, to protect one's people and passed away. The king took the bodhisatta's head to his country, and it was plated with gold, kept it as a souvenir to remind him of this memorable event.

Even we heard some animals' stories (some were pets) who saved human lives in modern days. What about human beings? It is true that human qualities are changing a lot. Men are becoming more and more self-centered, greedy, and selfish. Do not talk about common people. Some political leaders and governments, they have the duties to govern their people with love, sympathy, concern, and for their welfare. But we saw quite a lot of them (here means more than before) exploited the citizen for their powers, misusing their powers and corrupted.

The worst thing was even some power mongers created wars and instability within one country and also to other countries (These were not difficult to understand. One reason is connecting with the lucrative arms businesses). Some superpowers they used many reasons and excuses to interfere with other countries and behaving like mafia bosses. Therefore, now we have seen many problems, the refugee crisis, wars, and instability in many parts of the world. In this remarkable story, we see the bodhisatta gave up his life to save his species. And an evil monkey who destroyed him.

All the big problems were coming from the small ones. Because of man's ignorance or delusion and it became a great problem (e.g., the Syrian War). Hatred is the most harmful and dangerous unwholesome mental state, which creates hells on the Earth and after death. In the middle east, there are a lot of wars going on, and some are only a few years old. The hatred between Israel and Palestinian is more than a half-century old. That means hatred cannot overcome by hatred, only by love, compassion, forgiveness, and understanding. Tit-for-tat view and policy never bring happiness, peace, and harmony, only more and more misery and suffering, which will never end. These are human hells on Earth.

17. Deeds that are Blameless

The commentary described blameless deeds as good conducts which related to body, speech and mind. It gave some examples as; undertaking the eight precepts, service to others, setting up parks, building bridges and could include many social services. Good conduct is *caraṇa*. So, it includes *sīla* and merits, all the wholesomeness.

In the *Ovāda-pāṭimokkha* (fundamental instructions to monks; it can also count the lay people in), the first group of Dhamma is: “Not to do evil, to cultivate merit and to purify one’s mind (*Dhammapada* verse 183). This is the Teaching of the Buddhas (all Buddhas)”. Here not to do evil and cultivate merit are blameless deeds. These are the foundations for highest mind.

There are quite a lot of blameless deeds, from smaller one to a great one. Therefore, it is a very wide subject to talk about. In general, any wholesome deed for the benefit and welfare of others can be counted here. Everyone can do it. It has to be started from the family life and then spreading to societies, country, and international levels respectively.

Every goodness has to be started from the family life when we are young. Therefore, family education is the foundation for all other goodness to develop and arise. All goodness is based on ethical and moral values and standards. Only wholesome causes have wholesome results. Human beings should never forget this natural law and always keep it in mind for our whole life. To have confidence/conviction in the laws of cause and effect is the basic principle to all human beings.

As a human being has to know what should be done and what should not be done. It seems very simple, but even still, many people do not believe in it or not take it very seriously. Blameless deeds can be included in *caraṇa*—good conduct. One of the nine attributes of the Blessed one (the Buddha) is *Vijjā-caraṇa-sampanna*—Consummate in knowledge and conduct.

This third attribute of the Buddha includes three types of dhamma: *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. *Sīla* and *samādhi* are including in *caraṇa*—conduct and *paññā* in knowledge. To do things for the benefits and welfare of others include oneself. The Buddha as a bodhisatta for many lives was the best example of it. Someone believes in the law of kamma will keep the precepts—*sīla* and not harming others and oneself.

Without *sīla* cannot develop *samādhi*. Without *sīla*, beings are wandering or falling

into painful existences. Conduct is two kinds; ordinary one and related to perfection (pāramī). Knowledge is also the same. Conducts included in pāramī are dāna, sīla and samādhi bhāvanā. Knowledge included in pāramī are: listening, studying, spreading suññatā Dharma—such as khandha, āyatana, dhātu, etc. Contemplating them with insight and teaching to others. In the past, people who met/encountered the Buddha's Teachings had fulfilled these two perfections.

Therefore, when later they encountered the Buddha's teachings again and realized the Path and Fruit; for examples, Ven. Sāriputta, Ven. Mahāmoggallāna, Khema Therī, Uppalavaṇṇā Therī; laymen Anāthapiṇḍika and Citta; lay women Visākhā and Uttara, etc. Someone only had the perfection of conduct and without knowledge, when later he encountered the Buddha's teachings, even listened to his teachings very often did not realize the Path and Fruit (For examples, King Pasenadi of Kosala and his Queen Mallikā, etc.).

Someone only had the perfection of knowledge and not conduct, such as cāga, sīla, bhāvanā, etc.; e.g., the well-known scholar monk Kapila of the Buddha Kassapa's time. After death, he fell into painful existence—the hell. In the Buddha Gautama's time, he was born as an animal—the big golden fish with the stinky mouth. I have met this kind of lay Buddhists; they are not interested in conducts and only in meditation. In the beginning, they are serious, but with time going on their saddhā (faith) are going down. Like a straw fire burning very quickly and die out very quickly.

Nowadays very difficult to find someone who has both qualities, conduct, and knowledge. It seems to me more and more people lack both. People are more and more greedy and selfish; their six sense doors are occupying with polluted media. Saddhā is a very important factor for developing good conducts/deeds, which leads to fortunate rebirths and having good lives and fortunes. Cāraṇa pāramī and saddhā give the results of high-class people, such as kings, leaders, rich people, etc. Paññā is a very important factor for developing knowledge—vijjā, which leads to understanding and has profound knowledge. It gives the results of becoming teachers, sages, and noble beings. Therefore, every Buddhists should develop both qualities.

What about ordinary good conduct? These are also very important for a human being. For the human race to have happiness, peace, and harmony, every man has to follow, practice, and develop good conduct. This is to be started from the family level, societies to international levels. To be fulfilled this inspiration and purpose, humans have to lay down the basic causes for it. These basic causes are moral value, standard, and education. If we observe and study present societies and international situations around the world, only we understand and see these basic causes as very important and unavoidable.

I had seen a documentary film on human problems in societies, environmental pollution, and some natural disasters caused by human deeds and actions. I will mention them in general only. There was a scene both a father and son liked playing a funny game (i.e., in the father's view). They slapped each other face in turn. The son might be four or five years old. This small boy was using force and sometimes seeing the father rubbing his face, but he was still laughing. Was this the way a father teaching his son becoming a good person? Now he was slapping you only with hands, but in the future will stab you with a knife.

People are nowadays instead of teaching children respect and gratitude to their parent, teaching them in opposite ways. Around the world, some are shouting for democracy, equality, and human right. Are human beings using it rightly, properly, and wisely? All their good qualities have to be used in the right place in wholesome matters. If using them, wrongly and improperly democracy becomes demo-crazy; equality and human right become licentious matters (current situations around the world become like these).

If not societies and the world will be in chaos. There was another scene in China. A father was filming with a video camera to his two children; a five years old boy and ten years old girl. What was he filming about? He was urging, encouraging, and cheering them to fight each other. Both children were quite different in body size and strength. Every time he was beaten and fallen on to the ground, and then she kicked and stamped on his body by force.

After sometimes the man's aunt came out to the compound to see what happened. This elderly woman did not say anything and went back inside the house. The father asked the boy to get up and fight. Every time the boy was beaten and cried; the father was laughing. By looking into the girl's eyes and face, and we can know that she had cruel nature (without the wholesome education, her future will be hopeless).

Where this video came from? It was sure that the father put it on the internet. It was also broadcasted in the TV news in China. Did he want to train his children to become criminals and terrorists? Why there are many violence, terrorist activities, and wars around the world? Even men are very cruel and violent to men. So, it is no need to mention how humans treat animals, can be even worse. Some video clips were showing how humans treated animals.

Some human cruelty on animals is shocking and unbelievable, similar to hell scenes. Men kill animals for meat, skins, and furs to satisfy their sensual pleasure. Sometimes the killings are like torturing animals in hell scenes, as example—stripping off the skin

furs of animals alive, etc. Even it is unpleasant to talk about these things. Some of the human activities to animals can be seen in shark fins, dolphin and whale meats industries, etc. The sea water is covered with red blood.

These business people and their workers are creating hell on Earth for their future births in hells. Some humans, for money they can do any evil thing you cannot imagine. For a momentary, fleeting pleasure they are harming others and themselves, really stupid and foolish. Also, men cannot escape the dangers made by men, such as air, water, earth and foods poisonings and many other kinds of pollution. All these things create health problems, life-threatening, and surviving problems.

There are also sex problems in societies. We heard about as young as ten years old pregnant girls in the news. Homosexuality among young boys and girls, even no need to mention about youth and grown-up people. Why these kinds of sexual abnormality becoming more and more in humans? Because we do not see it as abnormal and immoral. Therefore, we encourage, promote, and protect these things to happen. Sexual misconducts create these results of abnormality. That is, people are born in these ways because of their past sexual misconducts (i.e., kammic results).

There are also some causes of this present life. These are unwholesome educations and polluted media. If sexual abnormality becomes out of control and become the more serious one—unlawful sex (adhamma-rāga), sexual practices between family members. For money or ill-will, make their things happen. The only solution is not by punishments, but with educations—on virtue, morality, and ethics; the results of its values, standards, and benefits. All worldly and spiritual developments always based on these qualities. Without these qualities even cannot be called a human being.

Another human problem is ignorance and delusion. Why are human beings becoming more and more ignorant and deluded? In short, their views and knowledge are wrong. Because of misguided opinions and attitudes come from media are wrong. Some of these media are promoting and spreading polluted things—can be called unwholesome educations to the public.

Therefore, we can see more and more smokers, alcoholics, drug addicts and their ages are younger and younger. Even some governments make illegal drugs become legal drugs. That is encouraging their citizens becoming drug addicts and ignoramuses, deluded citizens. What a pity? The ways of solving problems are wrong.

It was the same as solving sexual misconducts and sexual abnormality, not by encouraging and promoting, but with wholesome education. Dealing with violence, terrorism, and wars are also in the wrong ways. It should be with love, compassion,

forgiveness, and wholesome education. With tit-for-tat, it will never end, and become more serious. It was like the polluted Earth, with more and more pollution (internal and external) more and more natural dangers and disasters will arise.

Human beings should check and contemplate/reflect their thinking/views and behaviors to find the solution for living beings and the Earth. Within a half-century (estimation only) human beings with the development of sciences and technology and unsustainable economic views and policies were making the Earth became situations today. We are nourishing the three unwholesome roots of sufferings—greed, hatred, and delusion for overindulgence of sensual pleasure. And we are never thinking about the outcomes it brings to the human race and the Earth.

We are nourishing and making friends with our real enemies—so the outcomes are dangers, disasters, and sufferings. We cannot become sages and noble beings instantly but at least can become virtuous, moral, and ethical persons. To achieve this inspiration, we must reduce the forces of greed, hatred, and delusion which influence us. This is the way of wholesome education—starting from family life to societies and international level. At least our deeds will become blameless and will have the blessing of happiness, peace, and harmony among us and in nature.

There was an interesting story about Magha—'The past life of Sakka—'The king of devas. This story represented blameless deeds. Magha was a young man of Macala village. He had a good heart and was repairing damaged roads and planting trees. In the beginning, he was doing alone and then later increasing to 33 men and their wives. Therefore, their projects of social works and social welfare increased in many ways. The head-man of these groups of villages was becoming displeasure with their activities of social welfare. Because he was making great fortunes with his promoting of wrong livelihoods, such as gambling, liquors, etc.

More and more people became good and ethical persons, and he made less and less money. So, he planned to get rid of them. He informed the king that Magha and his group were planning to revolt him. At last, the king believed in him and arrested Magha and his men and condemned them to death. The executioners buried their bodies in the ground with the heads above and stamped them with elephants.

They had already prepared for it. Magha asked his men not to have ill-will and hatred to the king, the executioners, and the elephants. Instead, they were spreading love and good-will to all of them. Because of the power of mettā and many of their wholesome merits for the welfare of others, the elephants could not stamp on their heads. The executioners tried with the elephants three times, and all were failed.

At last, the king asked Magha did they have any mantra-sacred syllables to stop the elephants from harming them. Magha answered to the king that they had it, and these were goodwill (mettā) and social welfare services to others. The king got rid of the evil head-man of the villages and replaced him with Magha. Magha was not an ordinary man. Because of his many past deeds after death and born as the king of 33 devas of Tāvātimsa Heaven. Later he met the Buddha, listened to one of his talks and became a stream-winner (sotāpanna).

His life taught us a very valuable lesson what to do as a human being. The Buddha taught that human birth was difficult to attain. It is not the direct meaning of difficult to born as a human being. The birth of a brahma-god was more difficult than human birth. Because one has to practice jhānas. But as a human who has many chances to do wholesome deeds and merits. Other higher births do not have these chances. They only enjoy their merits and jhānic pleasure. The human world is like a treasure island.

There are seven kinds of treasure hidden on the earth. These treasures are:

- (1) The treasure of conviction (saddhā)
- (2) The treasure of virtue (sīla)
- (3) The treasure of conscience (hiri)
- (4) The treasure of concern (ottappa)
- (5) The treasure of listening (Dhammasavaṇa)
- (6) The treasure of generosity (cāga)
- (7) The treasure of discernment (paññā)

What happens to nowadays human being? Do they know about the hidden treasures and find it? Even most human beings do not know that these things exist. They do not have the treasure's map. Therefore, most of them behave like rats, cockroaches, and flies. They do not behave like bees, which are selfless creatures and doing their duties for the welfare of others. If someone behaves like rat, cockroach and fly and becomes a nuisance to society, their future births will be very painful.

Now someone is power-monger (politicians, leaders), war-monger, money-monger, etc. because of their misdeeds and next time, they will be a servant cleaning toilet. And a rich person will be a beggar and begging for foods. These seven kinds of treasures are called noble treasures can be found only in the Buddha's Teachings. Everyone can attain it by noble deeds or deeds that are blameless. Therefore, every Buddhist should cultivate these blameless deeds and attaining the highest blessing in the life—i.e., Nibbāna.

18. Avoiding, Abstaining from Evil

In the commentary evil referred to the four unwholesome actions:

1. destruction of life
2. taking what is not given
3. sexual misconduct
4. false speech.

It did not mention the refraining from intoxicants because it included in the 19th blessing. These evil actions will be blamed and not praised by the wise because it is not only harmful to others but also harmful oneself in the present or future life to come. Avoiding from evil as not delight in evil in the mind and seeing the dangers in them. In the ten unwholesome dhammas, seven items belong to physical and verbal actions and the last three items are mind actions. Therefore, all the unwholesome dhammas are included in it.

There are three kinds of abstaining from evil:

1. abstaining from evil when encounter it,
2. by undertaking the precepts (five precepts) and
3. by eradication (the first realization of Nibbāna with the Noble Eightfold Path or practice).

Avoiding and abstaining are āraṭi and virati, respectively in Pāli. Avoiding is the matter of the mind, and abstaining is the matter of speech and bodily action. Avoiding evil means even not thinking about evil or unwholesome things with the mind. Speech and bodily action come from the thinking mind that mind is more important of the 3. In one sutta of the Buddha (discourse), a monk wanted to go back to lay life. The reason was there were many rules for a monk to look after that difficulty for following it.

The Buddha knew about it and asked him to look after one only. That was the mind. What is evil? Pāpa is a Pāli word for evil. What are evil dhammas? The ten unwholesome dhammas are evils. See the ten unwholesome courses of action in the 9th blessing—well mastered disciplines. In the ten unwholesome courses of action, three connect with the bodily actions, four with speech and three with the mind actions respectively. In this 18th protection with blessing, avoiding means not thinking about all the ten unwholesome dhammas.

There was a Dhamma talk by Sayadaw Dr. Nandamalarbhivamsa—The kammic results of misconducts, based on Duccaritavipāka Sutta (AN iv 247 or AN.8.40

Duccaritavipākasuttaṃ). Here I will give the gist of this talk on the results of misconduct and the nature of kamma—actions. So, that people will know how much importance the protection with the blessing of avoiding, abstaining from evils. Actions, after done, can give the results for many world aeons. The resultant energy of the action and its quality will not disappear.

The volition—cetanā or mental factor has disappeared, and the energy is leaving behind and following with the mind process. It cannot be seen. The power of energy able to perform things. As an example, some of the lessons we learned at a young age did not disappear. Good conduct—sucarita or wholesome dhamma is like medicine. Misconduct—duccarita or unwholesome dhamma is like a disease. Wholesome dhamma removes unwholesome dhamma, e.g. see Ven. Aṅgulimāla's story.

It is good to know these things so that people can avoid and abstain from evils. If not, people will make mistakes again and again and becoming worse. This discourse of the Buddha was from the Aṅguttara Nikāya. It was mentioned eight factors—the eight misconducts.

(1) 'The taking of life—when indulged in, developed, and pursued leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of hungry shades.

The slightest of all the results coming from the taking of life is, when one becomes a human being, it leads to a short life span.

(2) Stealing—leads to hell, rebirth as a common animal, to the realm of hungry shades (ghosts). When one becomes a human being, the slightest result of stealing is leading to the loss of one's wealth.

(3) Illicit sexual behavior—leads to hell, rebirth as a common animal, to the realm of hungry ghosts. When one becomes a human being, the slightest result of illicit sexual behavior is leading to rivalry and revenge.

(4) Telling falsehoods—to hell, rebirth as animal and ghost. When it becomes a human being, it leads to being falsely accused.

(5) Divisive tale—bearing—to hell, rebirth as animal and ghost. When it becomes a human being, it leads to the breaking of one's friendships.

(6) Harsh speech—to hell rebirth as animal and ghost. When it becomes a human being, it leads to unappealing sounds.

(7) Frivolous chattering—to hell, rebirth as animal and ghost. When it becomes a human being, it leads to words that are not worth taking to heart

(8) The drinking of fermented and distilled liquors—to hell, rebirth....., it leads to mental derangement.

In the ten unwholesome courses of action, not included the drinking of fermented and distilled liquors. Therefore, some think that it is wholesome. But in this sutta, the Buddha included in the misconduct—duccarita and also in the five precepts. Although it does not include in the ten unwholesome actions directly, count it with the misconduct of illicit sexual behavior.

Because in the five sensual pleasures, alcoholic drinks are connecting with taste. Therefore, count it with illicit sexual behavior. Duccarita—misconduct means all the bad/not good behaviors. To fulfill misconduct, there are five factors included. As an example for talking life:—

- (1) Must be a living being
- (2) Knowing that it is a living being
- (3) Has the intention(volition) to kill
- (4) Commit the action of killing
- (5) Has been killed.

Doing an action, there are many stages; beginning, many times, a lot or again and again. And then become a habit, and later a character. In the beginning, you take drugs. Sometimes later, the drugs take you. And then put you in the jail, becomes a criminal. Sometimes we are doing things without intention. This intentional/volitional killing can fall into hell. After freeing from hell and born as an animal.

After death as an animal and born as a hungry ghost (peta). The slightest of its result is when it becomes a human being has a short life span. For stealing: The slightest result is the loss of one's wealth. For illicit sexual behaviors: the slightest result is hating by others and has many enemies. For telling falsehoods: the slightest result is being falsely accused and arrested.

For decisive tale-bearing: The slightest result is breaking of one's friendships and family break up. These things happen very often. For harsh speech: the slightest result is not hearing about pleasant and happy things and matters. For frivolous chattering/useless and meaningless: the slightest result is no one taking his words to heart or accepting what has said. For drinking of fermented and distilled liquors: the

slightest result is leading to mental derangement or becomes a dull and stupid person.

As a human being, it is very important to understand the analysis of action. Because the human world is a place where a living being has more chances than any other existences to cultivate goodness. There was a sutta in the Majjhima Nikāya on the analysis of action; Cūḷa-Kammavibhaṅga Sutta (MN 135). It is worthwhile to study it for avoiding and abstaining from evils and performing goodness.

Therefore, human existence is a precious birth and should use it properly and skillfully. If not with this precious existence can do a lot of evil deeds will suffer here and after. Also, the nature of mind is difficult to control, and it takes an interest in unwholesome matters and sensual pleasure.

There are three ways of abstaining from evils (virati).

- (1) Sampatta-virati: abstaining from evils by controlling one's mind when an encounter with a situation.
- (2) Samādāna-virati: undertaking the precepts and looking after it.
- (3) Samuccheda-virati: perfect or noble abstaining of the noble beings (ariyas) from stream-enterer to arahant.

Because they had already eradicated defilement (kilesa) related to evil deeds, with Path and Fruit Knowledge.

On Sampatta-virati:

There was a story in Sri Lanka related to sampatta-virati.

There were two brothers, and one day, their mother was sick. So, they invited a doctor to treat her. He told them a prescription which could cure her illness. That was to eat fresh rabbit meat. It seems that there are misconceptions relating to some prescriptions of the traditional medicines to cure some diseases and physical health illnesses. How an evil deed of killing and harming animals by using their bodily parts can cure illness and diseases.

These are going against the wholesome dhamma and law of kamma. The result of its outcome could be very serious. The very good example is Wu-han virus (or Covid 19) which effected the whole world. It caused a lot of problems and losing lives. I do not think Dr. Jīvaka (the famous doctor of during the Buddha Gautama's time) and Dr. Sun soon-miao (the famous doctor of the Tang Dynasty, who lived for 120 years of age) would give these kinds of prescriptions. These two great doctors were intelligent

and wise. The younger brother went to the field to look for rabbits. After sometimes he saw a rabbit was eating the young rice crops. The rabbit, after seeing him and in fright, ran for its life. He was chasing the rabbit and at last its legs entangled in creepers.

When he caught the poor lovely animal, and it was trembling with fear. He had a strong sympathetic feeling to the rabbit and could not take its life. Therefore, he released the poor creature and decided to go back home. His elder brother learned what had happened and scolded him for not concerning their mother's illness.

To please his brother, he decided to use the Dhamma of truth to cure his mother. He made the following asseveration of truth. "In my whole life, I have never been killed an animal intentionally." Here there were two factors; his *sīla* was pure, and the asseveration which he made was also true. After repeating the asseveration of Truth for three times and the mother was cured. In the world, nearly everyone encounters unavoidable difficulty and problem, e.g., doing unwholesome matter for livelihood. When encounter problems, it is very important to use the right way or method. If not, it becomes more confusing or worse. (e.g., the 2011 year of the Syrian Civil war was a great tragedy).

Therefore, world leaders and governments should contemplate this point very carefully. In the beginning, by solving the problem in an unwholesome way, it seems to be solved the problem for a while. Later it becomes worse and chaotic. Because the purpose was overcoming it instantly. But it is also like collecting the unwholesome kammic results. These points are very important to consider and contemplate. There was a very good Dhamma talk by Sayadaw Dr. Nandamalarbhivamsa on the unwholesome and wholesome dhammas.

In there has many valuable points to contemplate and follow accordingly by everyone. This section also about—avoiding and abstaining from evil deeds. Therefore, Sayadaw's talk will help us to achieve this very important protection with a blessing. Here I will give a gist of it only. Whatever thing we are doing, this must be a wholesome matter. This was taught by the Buddha. By doing wholesome action, someone gains a valuable thing. Wholesome dhamma is not easy to arise. It needs the causes for it to arise. With its arising and one will get the good result of natural energy (kammic wholesome energy).

This is the view of Buddha and noble beings (*ariyas*). But worldlings do not see in this way. They only want to gain wealth and fortunes. For them, wealth and fortunes are greater than wholesome merits. But the Buddha saw it oppositely because it gave a longtime result. To attain wealth and fortunes also good, but it has a short life span,

and we get it only for one life. Wholesome merits give the results of for this life and next life until the end of saṃsāra.

The Buddha was always thinking about for this life and next life, i.e., seeing both sides. For permanence and short term; we should choose the permanent results. If we got both, then it is better. If not, then just choose the permanent one. The Buddha always encouraged us to have mindfulness with contemplation. With this, we will find out the answers and can solve the problems. If seeing things superficially, we cannot see it clearly or penetrate it.

This is the case with most world leaders and governments, economists, and scientists. Therefore, they create a lot of human problems and environmental pollution in today world. Whatever matter must contemplate and reflect carefully and wisely. We—human beings should have the kinds of education with discernment and wisdom, which can discern cause and effect, good or bad, wholesome or unwholesome, long term and short term. Most human beings nowadays are lacking in these qualities.

These are the results of wrong educations which clouded the mind. The shining nature of the mind buried underneath of greed, hatred, and delusion, which make the mind darker and darker. Wholesome kinds of education are valuable and priceless treasures. Buddhists should not waste their precious lives and times. With wise contemplation and reflection do what should be done to pass our lives is the best way. In one sutta, the Buddha reminded his followers and disciples as follow.

“The days and nights are relentlessly passing, how well am I spending my time? This should be reflected upon again and again.”

Do we ever reflect how we spend our times every day, every month and every year? Without contemplation, no answer will come out. With it will find out the answer and doing thing accordingly. It is like a business matter, has to reflect very often on loss and profit, but very few reflect with life. Therefore, most people do not know about loss and profit in life. Without any answer could not change the way of life. With contemplation in economics can change the way, system, and method.

Everyone wants to be:

- (1) long life
- (2) healthy
- (3) happiness and
- (4) fulfilled one's wishes.

A life with these four factors can be called successful enough. But the Buddha

mentioned more than that. Is long life good for everyone? Someone in life has a lot of misconducts and demerits with longer life means more misconducts and demerits. Like a war going on longer and more sufferings and deaths (see, the Syrian Civil War). It is more harmful to this person in his long life. Someone (e.g., a miner) like digging a pit; with more digging, it becomes deeper and more dangerous. What the Buddha taught was always true. It is about natural law—cause and effect, without time limits. Only we do not know it yet. There was a verse in the Dhammapada worth for contemplation.

The Buddha was comparing two long-lived persons. One is no *sīla* and going his life with unwholesome matters. The other is the opposite nature. A life without *sīla* and with misconducts like a pit with the continuous digging becomes deeper. With *sīla* and merits is like building a high wall, with continuous construction, it becomes higher and higher. Therefore, for the second person, his long life is better.

So, the verse said: “A life with merits one day is better than a life with demerits for 100 years.” Their values are quite different. For a fool, his life also affects others (surroundings). According to the law of action, everything that one has done is responsible for oneself. But it also affects the surroundings. A bad son creates sufferings for the whole family. A good son brings happiness to the whole family. But his path of life is nothing to do with the family. Therefore, as long as a fool life with demerits effects the whole family. If he dies will bring peace to the family. A gigantic useful tree is a refuge for 10,000 birds. (A Burmese Saying).

It is amazing to know the wise social views of Chinese sages. There were many similarities between them and the teachings of the Buddha (i.e., on the worldly matters). They knew a long time ago that moral and ethical education was fundamentally important for goodness and wholesome developments in societies. Even they emphasized it to start with the family. Because parents are the first teachers of a child and their mind is pure and innocent in the beginning.

Therefore, the parents are easy to teach and train them whatever directions they want them to be. Parents can teach and train a child to become a sage or a criminal. In life, there are only two kinds of persons; someone with moral, ethical standard and value and someone without them. Their lives are far away to each other, as sky and earth. Attaining a human existence has two duties; performing the duty of one’s welfare and others. In Pāli language: These are called *attahita* and *parahita*.

Based on these two duties, the Buddha divided human beings into four groups. These were:

- (1) Only for oneself and not for others
- (2) Only for others and not for oneself.
- (3) not for oneself and others.
- (4) for oneself and others (both).

The third person is the worst of all. A person with attahita and parahita is the best. Without attahita, and cannot has parahita. A bad person cannot make people good. (By protecting oneself, one protects others—Sedaka Sutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya, SN.47.19 Sedakasuttam). By benefitting oneself and harming others is also not good. Nowadays, in societies, this kind of businesses and making money is more than before, e.g., using pesticides in crops, fruits, vegetables, etc.

Tobacco and alcoholic businesses are making a lot of money and harming a lot of people with health problems, social problems, etc. There is no end to mention these things. But these people never think about their actions which they cannot escape for a short-term sensual pleasure. With more consumers and make more money, but the kammic results they have to pay are greater and heavier (They are like licking the honey on the edge of razor blade).

First, we should benefit oneself and later to help others. Buddha and bodhisattas were noble beings who arose in the world for their welfare and others. Philanthropists are also in this group. Therefore, they are becoming richer and richer. The Pāli word—hita means good conditions for good results to arise. Sukha—means happiness, the result of hita.

Therefore, people should create good conditions (hita) for the happy results of oneself and others. The education systems of Chinese sages were for this purpose. Chinese civilization and culture surviving for over 3000 years of history is one of the main factors from these systems. Some government projects and planning are also a good example of hita. Parents are also must create good conditions (hita) for their children to develop in morality, ethics, and virtues. To become a good and virtuous person is more important than a highly educated and rich person. Most worldly problems come from the fools and not from the wise and virtuous people.

Some parents, instead of teaching or training them to become good and virtuous people they left inheritances for their children. Without moral foundations, some of these outcomes are not good. Some parents create good conditions such as good educations (here mean for livelihoods), (fortune) money and good jobs only but not for the mind. So, some of these children also do not have good endings. Good conditions are like good weathers.

Therefore, in the old days some highly venerable monks at the end of their treatises with wishes and prayers for good weather and rain. So, that having good weather and rain no drought and other dangers. Then human beings and other animals can be survived. Every politician (leaders), economists and scientists should take these points very seriously. Our physical worlds (physical body and nature-earth) are depending on the four hita—good conditions; action (deed and behavior), mind (mental states), weather (climates), and foods.

If human beings continue to act and behave foolishly and stupidly like nowadays, there will be more disasters, dangers, and sufferings to arise. Do human beings want to be suffered and distressed? I hope not. Therefore, all parents and governments must create good conditions for their children and citizens. The Buddha arose in this world for this reason and purpose. Not like the God and the gods of other faiths. They worship him with fear and rely on his power. If they do something wrong with confession is forgivable. God has the power of protecting and blessing.

There is nothing to do with one's power and rely on outside power. Therefore, one's intelligence, knowledge, and ability to do things become blunt and stagnant. In human, the qualities of desire—wholesome desire (chanda), persistence (viriya) and intelligence / discrimination, discernment (paññā) are very important. The Buddha gave us the guidelines and showing the ways only. He taught people to increase and develop their goodness and knowledge, stopped and prevented them not to do unwholesome matters. Everyone has the inner powers and has to rely on them. These powers are good conditions(hita).

We should never forget these powers and always increasing and developing them. These inner powers are: conviction(saddhā), virtue(sīla), learning(suta), generosity(cāga) and discernment(paññā). These are the inner powers and as good conditions for everyone. Someone has these best conditions or qualities he/she will have worldly good fortunes and welfare in this life and afterlife. These inner powers or good conditions are also called noble growth or spiritual growth. Even the Buddha mentioned that someone had these qualities and performing the duties, and then whatever wishes and inspirations he made could be fulfilled.

These inner powers are good conditions(hita). Everyone should develop these qualities. Only then we will get happiness and peace. By knowing these things (especially the teaching of the Buddha), the wholesome paths we walk are becoming clear and straight. In the human world whatever we are doing, the main points or right standards are: what should be done and what should not be done, what is suitable and what is not suitable, what is a benefit and what is harmful, etc.

All combine these opposites, then there are only two kinds of phenomena (dhamma)—wholesome and unwholesome (kusala and akusala). Others are only human's views. We should be afraid of and fear of unwholesome things and matters, and not others. For example, most people are afraid of and fear of hells, but not the unwholesome deeds and unwholesome dhamma. Anger, hatred, and ill-will are dangerous and very harmful to both. The result of evil deeds that come from them is leading to hell existences.

The contemplation and reflection of benefits and faults of wholesome and unwholesome dhammas and their actions are the cause of progress and development for the human race, in Pāli—ādinava, and ānisaṃsa (faults and benefits). In the four satipaṭṭhāna sutta: The first one is body contemplation. There is a section called mindfulness and clear knowing—sati and sampajañña. The commentary commented on four aspects of clear knowledge or knowing. The first and second are purpose and suitability. These are connecting with what has mentioned above.

Samādāna-virati: undertaking the precepts and looking after it

In human life, sometimes we can be encountered with difficulties and do not know how to deal with it. Most people in these kinds of situation and follow what the majority has done. Knowing that it is not suitable, but most people still doing it. Therefore, they are just making the same mistake. Nowadays, this kind of thinking is quite common. Not able to use one's knowledge and decision and follow with the common people. But they do not know that in the world there one more fool than wise. There was an incident told by a bhikkhunī.

One time she was traveling by train and met a Christian on it. The Christian said to her that he also believed in the law of kamma. But nowadays most people were doing things in unethical ways that we all had to follow suit. And he could not do anything about it. What he said was very wrong, and two mistakes in his words. The law of kamma and the Creator are two different views. Someone believes in the Creator will not accept the law of kamma, and vice versa. If one of them is right, then the other is wrong. If he believed in the law of kamma would not follow the ways of harming oneself and others. We have to deal with our livelihoods and family matters, but also try to avoid and abstain from evils at the same time.

The following story was abstained from unwholesome action. In Sri Lanka, a man had undertaken the five precepts from a monk and went to the forest for fire woods with his ox. Later he lost the ox and was looking for it. Unexpectedly he encountered

a boa constrictor, and it constricted his body. He was thinking of to cut off its head with the knife in his hand. And remembering of he had been undertaken the five precepts before and reflected on it for three times.

After the last time, he resolved not taking the life of the boa and threw his knife away. Because of his pure sīla and mind power, the boa freed him and went away. Hiri—sense of shame and ottappa—fear of wrongdoing are the important factors for preventing someone from doing evil actions. These dhammas are also called the guardians of the world. These are not ordinary kinds of shame and fear, and with the knowledge in it. These are also including in the seven noble treasures. Someone has these two qualities will complete with this blessing of avoiding and abstaining from evils.

19. Refraining from Intoxicants

It is a very important matter need to contemplate and reflect by every human being. Alcoholism has the longest human history to harm the human race. In some societies, even it becomes a culture. Drug addiction is worse than alcoholism, but it is not becoming a human culture yet. Nowadays, some countries legalized some drugs that will also become a human culture sooner or later in the future. Alcoholism is less harmful than drug addictions, but its effects on societies are much wider and complicated.

Here refraining from intoxicants means all kinds of intoxicants which clouded the mind and cannot think clearly and behave foolishly. It is one of the very ill problems in societies. But the majority of people not taking it seriously like smoking problems. Why is that? Because they are in ignorance of the five precepts and no discernment in the harmfulness of alcoholism. It is including in the five precepts and may be the most dangerous one. If someone breaks this precept, there are more chances to break the others too. Because the mind cannot think good or bad, right or wrong, proper or improper, etc.

Alcoholics are the nuisances to their families and societies they lived in. They usually create a lot of problems and unhappiness in their families. Therefore, a very ill and serious problem in societies, especially for families. Everyone in a family should tackle alcoholism successfully, and then will have a prosperous and happy family life. There is a lot to talk about life sufferings and unhappiness which come from alcoholism. There was a documentary film on alcoholism and the sufferings and dangers it brings to societies.

This was the collections of photographs around the world of drunkards and alcoholics. From all these photos we can see very clear of the sufferings and dangers alcoholism brings to societies. These pictures were very disgusting and representing the shameless behavior of drunkards. When someone is drunk, the mind is becoming abnormal and out of control. And then he can do any evil thing which brings harmfulness to oneself and others.

Even their standards as a human being are lower than animals. Hiri—sense of shame and ottappa—fear of wrongdoing are the two important factors for preventing someone from doing evil actions. Therefore, these are called the guardians of the world. A drunkard or an alcoholic cannot have these two qualities. Then becomes shameless and not fear of wrongdoing—ahirika and anottappa.

These will destroy himself/herself and their family life. I had seen a lot of these people in my life. Some men and women because of their past lives of good karmas; in this life, they had the good chances to meet good people as their spouses. But their present lives' of karmas (misconducts) were not good that they ended up with miseries. They became alcoholics, drug addicts, gamblers, etc., because of bad companions that did not have any moral, education. They did affect not only their own lives but also their family members.

If both partners are immoral, the family lives are even worse. Even the husband is very bad, with a good wife or a mother, the family can be protected. But with a bad wife or mother, the family life is ruined. I had met both types of family in societies.

In 2008, there was a tragic case in England. A man had a son with a woman. Not very long, they were separated. The man left his son and the mother. I did not know the reason behind their separation. Anyhow she was a drug addict and lived with another man who was also a drug addict.

The little boy was known as Baby P. In the news media not mentioned the real boy name. The Baby P was tortured by the drug addict for sometimes that not very long died with many injuries. The cruel mother and her boyfriend were arrested. This sad news was shocked by the people. There were many stories in the world about alcoholism (included drug addiction and drug addicts), its problems and sad stories. A lot of social problems are made by foolish, stupid, and deluded people. Man-made sufferings are unnecessary to arise.

If people have good moral standards and education which started from family life and many of these problems can be prevented. If everyone has good knowledge/education on the law of karma and following his/her life accordingly to natural law, life is quite enjoyable and better. But the majority are ignorant about it and rely on the outside power that they did a lot of unwholesome things and matters; and then dishonestly blame it on others and the outside power. They cannot solve their problems and overcome them. Every story, good or bad, suffering or happiness, pleasant or unpleasant, etc., has lessons to teach us. Even things in nature can teach us many valuable lessons, such as water, lotus flower, sunrise, sunset, etc. Here I want to present two true stories; a man and a woman, both of them were alcoholics.

It showed how alcoholism destroyed both lives and their good karmic results of past lives. With contemplation, we can learn valuable lessons from these incidents. The man was over 60 years of age when he passed away with cancer. He was born at the beginning of the 20th century in a Buddhist country, but the family was not

Buddhists. His education was only at the middle school level. But he was a well-known carpenter as a profession and had good incomes. As a young man married a young woman with an arranged marriage.

Marriage is the most important matter between a man and a woman. He was very lucky in this matter because he encountered a dutiful wife. His wife was not only dutiful as a housewife, but also a good mother to the children. From where a good wife and a good mother come from? Without a doubt that both were the outcome of a good daughter. Even though she was low educated like most women of her generation, she had high qualities as a good daughter, wife, and mother.

A perfect woman, in accordance with the old Chinese standards. She was a considerate person and had extreme patience and endurance with pains and difficulties in family life. We may think this couple had a happy family life. There was a real and cruel enemy between them; alcoholism. It destroyed the man life. In reality, he was a good person, intelligent, and had a creative mind. If he was not drunk and a very nice man.

After he had drunk and like a crazy person. He was living among Buddhists but never became a Buddhist. His children were also very good because under the protection of a good mother. Some of them became Buddhist practitioners. He was successful in his livelihood and making money, but most (in his early life) was wasted by alcohol and gambling. His drunken behavior, especially speech, was creating a lot of bad deeds day in day out.

At the age of over 60, he was afflicted with terminal cancer and died in an unconscious mind state in the hospital, the sign of not a good rebirth. His wife because of her moral qualities and good deeds still alive, healthy, and nearly becomes a centenarian.

Here we can contemplate this man's life what we have learned with the fourth, 5th and 6th blessings: living in a civilized land, having made merits in the past; directing oneself rightly. His present life was completed with the fourth and 5th blessings, but his great mistake was not directing oneself rightly.

At last ended his life with downfall. Even we had many good karmas in past lives and using them wrongly in this present life will end up with misery like this man. Also, our future lives in saṃsāra will be not good.

The second story was about a middle-aged woman. A tribal woman of a small tribe in Taiwan. Most of them have a history of alcoholism. It seems to me this came from

their cultural background. Because I have seen many of them drink regularly from old to young ages, from grandparents to grandchildren. From this kind of cultural background, she was a low educated woman in this developed island. She also did not have a moral standard and education from her young age.

This could be clearly justified from her behavior and deeds, but she had the good kamma from her past life. Because she married a Chinese old man who was good and had a secure life. If she had the moral standards and gave up her alcoholism, it was no doubt that she would have a happy family life. After she was born a child to this old man and they ended up with separation. Now she is living a miserable life and doing a lot of evil deeds.

In these two true stories, the man's life was worth contemplation. He had a very good kamma from his past lives. There was nothing lacking for his progress as a human, but he had two weak points. He did not have moral education like his wife. Another important cause for his downfall was an association with bad companions. But he also had the skill to make many friends; some were educated and high-class people. He met these good people very rare and learned nothing from them. His usual companions were the alcoholics and always gave them free drinks.

In the Maṅgala Sutta: The first blessing and protection are: not consorting with fools. What the Buddha taught was quite true. If someone lacks this first blessing, and then he/she will lack the others. He had never been consorting with religious people, even though he had many chances. All human problems and sufferings were caused by fools and not by the wise. Therefore, he had wasted his precious human birth and good chances. We could see this type of people in the world; some were government leaders and rich men.

Instead of using their political powers and riches for the benefits of others, they created evil deeds which would send them to the lower worlds and a lot of sufferings and miseries in the future to come. Drunkenness is like a culture in some tribal and hill tribe people. They never take it as harmful and unwholesome. Around the world, many people take alcohols as nothing wrong with them.

Therefore, alcohols and cigarettes are successful businesses and making a lot of money. I had been met a lot of people with drunkenness and alcoholism before but never seen anyone made progress in their life. Even originally if they had possessed good qualities which were spoiled with alcoholism. Therefore, the Buddha mentioned that there were four matters made a monk never shine. These were money, women, wrong livelihoods and alcoholism (all sorts of intoxicants).

There are six faults connecting with intoxicants:

- (1) lost one's wealth and fortune,
- (2) leading to quarrels and fights,
- (3) get diseases, illnesses,
- (4) has bad reputation,
- (5) without shame and fear to evil deeds,
- (6) weaken in perception, memory, and knowledge.

(1) Lost one's wealth and fortune

Because of intoxication, people become heedless (*pamāda*), or negligence. Therefore, easy to commit unwholesome deeds/ acts. If an immoral person with intoxication, there will be more and more misconducts. *Appamāda* means non-negligence and represents mindfulness (*sati*). *Appamāda* is not ordinary mindfulness, not forget in wholesome dhamma and actions. Always looking for doing good deeds.

Therefore, it is not easy to arise and has to be cultivated. So, the Buddha taught the four foundations of mindfulness for us. Without mindfulness, knowledge cannot arise. There was a *jātaka* story reminding us of the first fault of intoxicants—lost one's wealth and fortune. In one of his lives as a human being, the bodhisatta had a son. After he died and born as Sakka—the king of heaven. He had been left some wealth for his son.

But he did not do any work and just spent the money left behind. The bodhisatta had a strong attachment to his human son, who became an alcoholic without him. So, he came down to the human world and gave his human son a wish—fulfilling magic pot. If he wished something just put his hand inside the pot and he would get it. He warned his son to look after the magic pot carefully, and not let it broken.

One day he was quite drunk and playing with the magic pot by throwing it up in the air and catching it when it came down. At one point, he could not catch it and fell to the ground and broken into pieces. Later he was very poor and died with misery. In the world, some had powers, wealth, and highly educated. With alcoholism or drug addiction, later their lives were spoiled like the foolish son of the bodhisatta.

(2) Leading to quarrels and fights

This fault is very common with drunken people. Someone drunk has noisy, clumsy,

and foolish behavior. When some are drunk, they like crazy people and talkative, without any sense. They are talking and doing things blindly that it like insulting people. Therefore, it leads to quarrel and fights with others. Some drunkards are very good nature when they are at normal times.

After drunk, they are insulting people and beating their wives. People can be patience with a crazy person but not to drunkards. So, they can create enemies and dangerous for themselves. These quarrels and fights sometimes lead to crimes and murders. And then it spoiled their whole life.

(2) Get disease and illness

The common illness caused by intoxicants is cancer. There are also some of them I do not know about it. It can also lead to mental derangement or mental problems. I had known a family who had two children with mental derangement. The father was an alcoholic and married two times. From their first wife, he had two children, a daughter, and a son. The son after graduated and had a proper job.

And later had mental derangement and became a crazy man on the street. From the second wife, the man had some children. The oldest daughter in her teens had mental derangement and became crazy. Sometimes the working of kamma is very strange and inconceivable. I am allergic to alcohols and have an aversion to alcoholics and drunkards.

But in my life, I can never run away or stay away from these people. Always encountered them and living near them. Did I have some kammas connected with intoxicants from my past lives? For example, I was selling intoxicants as a livelihood, etc.

(4) Has a bad reputation

Someone has a reputation as an alcoholic or a history of alcoholism, nobody trusts him. He will have difficulty to find a job, and nobody wants to hire him. Their bad reputations also affect their families. Not only they are looking down by others also to their family members. I am sure a good family will not marry their children into an alcoholic family. They will shun them and stay away from them.

A good reputation is very important in society to someone for progress and developing in the right direction. The Buddha himself encourage to associate with the

wise and not the fools. Because human problems, sufferings, and dangers come from the fools, not the wise. Therefore, someone with a bad reputation will never approach by good or wise people.

So, they will not have the chances to correct himself/herself. Because of that in their lives, they cannot progress and develop in the right direction. Only bad people will contact him/her for their evil deeds. So, his life will become darker and darker. When I was young, I heard Buddhists doing morning and evening pūjas (worshipping in a shrine room). One of the wishes they made in their prayers was never encountering and making companionship with the fools while wandering in existences (i.e., saṃsāra).

At that time, I did not understand the meanings very well and clearly. Later after studying the Buddha's Teachings in the Suttanta Piṭaka I was amazed and admired the wisdom of the Buddha. There were many stories in the piṭaka mentioned some people life stories. Mostly good people encountered or made companionship with bad people, then their lives never became good, always in dangerous problems, and even sometimes spoiled their lives.

If we research, human history, golden ages were the period when human beings had good moral standards. (e.g., see the Chou Dynasty in China). It is also important to read and contemplate on the discourse of the Buddha, The Lion's Roar on the Turning of the Wheel—Cakkavatti Sutta (No. 26—Dīgha Nikāya, DN. 26 Cakkavattisuttaṃ or Cakkavattisihanādasuttaṃ), on these matters. We will understand today human problems in the world and the future to come.

(5) Without shame and fear of evil deeds

People sometimes may do evil deeds without shame and fear even they are in normal mind states. Therefore, for a drunken person, it becomes easier to be in misconducts. Because in the drunken state, he cannot think clearly and become an ignorant person. So, he is doing things foolishly and impulsively. Sometimes people in the drunken state commit heavy or serious crimes that which spoiled their whole lives.

Therefore, no one should take intoxicants as lightly as cigarettes. Because many people take smoking lightly that it is the great killer to human as cancer. But still many are worshipping their killer—intoxicants and cigarettes. How much stupid these people are? Money is not easy to come by. Everyone has to work hard for it. And then wasting it or paid their killers to murder them. Many more foolish than these people are businessmen who make money with these harmful things.

Their kamma debts will never end; they have to pay for it in the miserable states. There are many foolish people in the world wasting their times and money for useless things and matters. Even these types of people do not have common sense. As an, e.g., there are three things; foods, intoxicant (including drugs) and cigarettes give to a young boy and a dog. Which one the boy and dog will choose? Another, e.g., during famine time, if you ask people to choose only one of the 3. All will choose foods for survivals.

I do not think at that time alcoholics, and drug addicts (including smokers) will choose the others for their survivals. There are many things and matters with these kinds of stupidity going on around the world. Some foolish people give up their health and life for these kinds of useless and meaningless things and matters. We should always remember and remind us that shame and fear of wrongdoing (hiri and ottappa) are the two guardians of the world.

Without shame and fear of evil things (ahirika and anottappa) are the destroyers of the world. With ahirika and anottappa human beings do not have moral and moral standards. Therefore, all sorts of evil deed and action arise. This effect and change the weather and natural environments. And many social problems and natural disasters appear and human life span decreases. It is sure that with these kinds of unwholesome conditions, there will be no happiness, peace, and harmony among human beings.

Therefore, anyone desires for happiness, peace, harmony, health, long life should develop moral values and standards. There was a well-known story of a monk who had psychic power and after drunk behaved shamelessly in front of the Buddha. There was a powerful dragon (nāga) made trouble in a village. Ven. Nagata who had psychic power went there and with his super-normal power, defeated the dragon.

Out of gratitude and respect villagers, there wanted to offer him the best thing they could think about. Some foolish men suggested the best alcohol in their village. At that time the Buddha not yet laid down the training rule of forbidding intoxicants for monks. In his alms-round, the villagers offered him alcohols. With a lot of consuming and he flattened out on the ground at the entrance of the village.

Some monks found him and carried him to the Buddha. After arriving there, they laid him down in front of the Buddha with his head towards the Blessed One. But he changed his position by turning his feet towards the Buddha. (a sign of disrespectful) Then the Buddha said to the monks that before Nagata had psychic power and people respected him. Now, he had none and even could not conquer a water snake.

The Buddha laid down the training rule of forbidding the monks to consume alcohols. From this incident, a sensible person became insensible and disrespectful and lost all his good qualities under the influence of intoxicants. Even a person with dignity becomes without any of them.

(6) Weaken in perception, memory, and knowledge

Knowledge is a connection between mindfulness and perception (sati and saññā). It is the power of perception. Therefore, these people (alcoholics and drunkards) become without discernment and wisdom. Even with intelligent people, their minds slowly become dull and blunt. They do not have the power to distinguish good or bad, proper and not proper, etc.

There was a tragic story that happened in a very long distant past life of Ven. Sāriputta. In one of his past lives, he was a king and addicted to intoxicants and meat. Every day he must take his meal with meat. One observant day (religious holiday) the meat in the kitchen was eaten by the dog. It was the day there is no shops were killing and selling meat. The cook had to inform the king about the incident. At the time he informed him, the king was very drunk with the baby prince on his laps and the queen also sat near him.

Suddenly like a crazy man, he killed the baby on his lap by twisting the neck then he asked the cook to use the dead baby as meat. The cook was so frightened that just took the baby away and cooked the human meat for him. After his meal, the king was fallen into sleep. After awakening from the sleep, and his drunkenness was gone. At that time, he remembered his baby son and asked the queen to bring the baby to him.

After knowing what was happening to the child, he had great remorse with pain, grief, and sorrow. With the strong hatred and aversion to intoxicants, he made the following strong resolution (adhiṭṭhāna) on giving up this harmful stuff forever. This was from this life onwards until his last life in saṃsāra.

Intoxicants and drugs affect one's mind states is very great indeed. I have mentioned two stories above; baby P and baby prince, both of them were killed by the drug addict and alcoholic. These seem a little better than killing one's parents. There were also stories of alcoholics, and drug addicts killed their parents. These were very worse cases. All these crimes cannot be corrected. After death, the destination of rebirths will be sure to hells.

There is a lot to say about the problems, dangers, and result of intoxicants and drugs. Some evil conducts even become human cultures when unwholesome dhammas, things, and matters become human cultures. All these represent the degeneration of human status and dignity. Evil things, matters, and deeds becoming a culture, then many people will follow and go after them, e.g., alcohols, drug, smoking, guns culture in the U.S, homosexuality, etc.

From my own experiences of encountering alcoholics and the documentary on alcoholics and alcoholism, the problems and dangers it brings to family and society are very great. By seeing all these miserable things and matters give you the sense of gloom and disgusting, like seeing rats and cockroaches and their surroundings. It was also very clear why the Buddha included the abstaining of intoxicants in the five precepts. All human beings, whatever their backgrounds, views, and beliefs should never take the five precepts as insignificance and these were taught by the Buddha.

It is the law of nature, not a philosophy, not come from thinking, invention, and imposed by someone. It will always true, anywhere at any place, anytime in the whole universe. Truth is universal. Heavenly beings are depending on the results of their wholesome karmas, as their livelihoods. Therefore, they understand the benefits of wholesome dhammas and actions more than human beings. Human beings have to rely on their efforts more than merits that they do not much appreciate it. When heavenly beings are near death, they want to take rebirths in the human world.

Because in the human world, they have more chances of making merits. Not because they like the human world. With merits after death and they return to heavenly existences. In a sutta, Sakka—the deva king came down to the earth offered foods to Ven. Mahā-kassapa was for this reason. Because he did not have the chance to make merit in Heaven. Let us refraining on intoxicants and protecting oneself and others. Let us bring peace and happiness to the family and society. This is the highest blessing.

20. Being Heedful of the Qualities of the Mind

The commentary explained it as—heedfulness is the antidote to heedlessness. Heedless means not doing things with care, not doing things in consistency and not doing things with persistence for the developing of the wholesome qualities. It also has the meaning of avoiding of one's duties, relinquish of the desire to do it and giving up the task not pursuing, not developing, not cultivating, without resolution and intentness in to do good. (i.e., for the wholesome qualities of the mind)

Always have mindfulness (sati) in daily life for doing things regard to ordinary and wholesome matters. It is called a blessing because it leads to mundane and supramundane achievements. The commentary equated heedfulness (appamāda) to mindfulness (sati).

In the Dhammapada. There was a chapter called Appamādavagga—Chapter on mindfulness. The well-known verse on appamāda (mindfulness) is verse 21:

Mindfulness (heedfulness) is the way to deathless (i.e., Nibbāna),
Heedlessness is the way to death (Dukkha).

Those who are heedful do not die and those are heedless of if already dead.

Here I want to extract some Dhamma points from two talks given by Tipiṭakadhara Yaw Sayadaw for reflection and contemplation. It seemed to me these were the excellent talks on appamāda for practical purposes. And it also expressed the wisdom of Tipiṭakadhara Sayadaw.

1. Hundreds of fruits on a stalk

I referred this to heedfulness (appamāda). It can cover the whole Buddhist Texts (piṭakas) and has extensive meanings. Appamāda was the Buddha's last word and his last teaching.

The last word of the Buddha:

“ Handa dāni, bhikkhave, āmantayāmi vo, vayadhammā saṅkhārā appamādena sampādetthā”

“Now, take heed bhikkhus, I caution you thus; Decline and disappearance is the nature of all conditions, Therefore, strive on ceaselessly with discerning and alertness.”

We have to use it practically (not just listen to the talk only). All Buddha-Dhammas can be used. Our life can be secure and free from dangers by following it. It is the controller of our whole life. All our reliable Dhammas could be stopped by losing sati. Therefore, the Buddha said that without appamāda someone was like a dead person. Don't measure life with time limits. The value of life should be measured with Dhammas. With sati, we have the knowing or knowledge. Even though we are blind or damaging of our body limbs, etc. and with the knowing and still alive. Otherwise, our knowing or knowledge is dead. Therefore, sati (appamāda) is very important. Do you know how to live with ageing, sickness and death? Could you be ready for dying?

With sati, our life values are increasing because it leads to sīla, samādhi and paññā (these three-fold trainings cannot separate from the practice of mindfulness). (Sayadaw mentioned the people of Kuru State—now New Delhi area). These people were not wasting their times. Without sati people are using their lives foolishly without benefits. They are only slaves to their khandhas and no benefits at all. Therefore, life without appamāda is disgusting. All unwholesome dhammas will come in if losing the knowing. So, it is not different from a dead person. Mindful practice is following behind of which our bodies have. (i.e., the four establishments of mindfulness). Only possession with sati can be called a human or can be called becoming a human. Then as long as with long life will have values (i.e., sīla, samādhi, paññā). In this way, the Buddha had arisen for us. With the development of Dhamma Power, value of life will be increased. As an example, fruits depend on a stalk. The fruits become in a random state if the stalk fallen off. It will be looked ugly. In the same way all human matters are like the fruits and the stalk is like heedfulness (appamāda). Therefore, all economies, social matters, etc. are relating to appamāda.

The working of sati:

1. to reveal the object,
2. to stay with the object,
3. not to lose the object,
4. not let other object come in, except with the present object or task, just only that,
5. the preceding of knowing and the following of knowing are in contact, not let other object come in between,

6. all the tasks are important; it doesn't mean do it all at the same time, only for one task which is now just doing. If not, you'll make mistakes and become confused. The Buddha-sāsana had arisen for the changing of all the bad things into good things. So, we encounter a good life. Actually, the khandha is not good because it carries aging, sickness and death with it. With the sāsana the life becomes good. We can extract goodness from life. The most important task is what you are doing now. All matters should be kept within sati. By losing sati and it'll fall apart. Therefore, every task is important and every moment has value. It becomes samādhi if you put effort with sati. With the purified mind becomes paññā. One has to be dutiful in Dhamma-duty (i.e., doing everything with sati) to become the insider of the sāsana.

Without knowledge (knowing), we are deceived by the khandha. It will deceive us as permanence, happiness, self and beauty (nicca, sukha, atta, and subha).

With knowing, you know the deceitfulness of the khandha. We're collecting kilesa by missing the present moment, then the knowing is dead and life becomes painful. Not lacking of sati and whatever you are doing will get wages. It is misusing the khandha by wasting time. This is the way of sensuality (kāma). However, the Dhamma is good although losing sati becomes disadvantage.

Doing things with sati is the middle way to Nibbāna and the way of no dangers. Problems are made by man. All the tasks at doing are important. Each should be the present work. The free day is the day not doing work (i.e., no sati) and can't do anything (i.e., during illness and dying). At that time, there is no refuge and it will lose the value of life. Take the present as valuable time. We can say life is good if we can extract goodness from it. It can also be said that life is not good because it has ageing, sickness and death. Khandha is valuable by becoming the raw materials for the essence of life.

In loka (the world), when is it the most valuable time? It's the present time. It can take the power. Doing things with sati we get wages. During the walking this is the most importance and you have to take the wages. (i.e., sīla, samādhi and paññā ways) Dhamma is the application for life. Here Sayadaw gave the example of Therī Kar who was the daughter of a Vesālī prince. One day, she was frying some vegetables and observing them with sati; then with contemplation, she became an anāgāmi. Later she ordained and continued the practice, finally she became an arahant. Working in a kitchen is also dāna (giving service).

With sati and contemplation, all tasks become practice, Everyday it's good works and become joyful tasks. It's workable and attaining merits. Therefore, we become regrettable for all the things which had been wasted before without sati. Doing our

duties for others is also *sīla* (e.g., all the household chores for a mother or wife). With *sati*, it becomes *samādhi*; and by observing and contemplation the changing phenomena, the wisdom arises.

Everyone (mother or wife) is cooking every day. No *sati*, the stalk is falling away (the stalk is *appamāda*). It's also lacking of one's Dhamma duty. No *sati* and defilement arises. *Khandha* always burns with the fires of ageing and *kilesa*. *Vipassanā* is watching the *Khandha* TV (most humans are watching the *Kilesa* TVs). *Khandha* is always showing the right news (*Kilesa* TV shows the wrong news).

The coming in of *kilesa* is for contemplation and also it comes to remind us. Each present moment is giving us the time limit. By wasting it and will never come back again. Losing or lacking of *sati* and life becomes painful. No *sati* and become a little crazy person. With *sati* and it becomes treasure. *Sati* is time controlling machine, it can finish the task, quicker. It's also mind controlling machine.

There is increasing of power by having *sati* at busy time. Everyone has only three paths to follow; the oppressive path, the path of extravagance and the path of security.

The oppressive path is one misusing the *khandha*. The path of extravagance is indulgent in sensuality. The middle way (i.e., the path of security) is the path of application and to use it for the development of the three-fold trainings (*sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*). Whoever may be have to go one of these paths. The train carriages are stopping at a station. These carriages are for passengers and cargoes. These are at a standstill because the head carriage does not come yet. The matters of human life (i.e., the four requisites) are like the cargoes of carriages. The train at a standstill is like without *sati*. Listening of Dhamma is like taking the head carriage which is like *sati*. After that it carries the train by passing through ageing, sickness and death stations towards *Nibbāna*.

2. A Diamond

(note: The title of this talk in Burmese was *sein-ta-lone* and it means a diamond.)

Here we can see Sayadaw's skill in using language for Dhamma. Only we understand the Burmese word "Sein" for Diamond, we will appreciate this talk.)

Sati with knowledge is called *appamāda* (heedfulness). It was also the last teaching of the Buddha. *Appamāda* is a diamond (*sein-ta-lone*). Whatever we're doing, for example, starting from coming and going, it should be a diamond. It includes *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. So, we're doing everything with insight (*vipassanā*). Everything is

related to guest and host. Guest means coming for a while and go such as from economy to all social matters will be gone. Therefore, we are counting the numbers of guest (in daily life). You have no free time if you have a diamond (put effort to maintain sati).

Also, you don't need to say: "I am busy". Staying with a diamond become host numbers, and will never leave you. It will always stay with you. Leading with sati in wholesomeness will send us to Nibbāna (Sayadaw gave this talk on the occasion of his 45 years in monkhood in 2005). The Buddha Gotama lived for 45 years of teaching after his enlightenment. Compared with the life span of the realm of the four great kings (i.e., the lowest heavenly beings—their one day is equal to 50 years of human being), the Buddha's teachings only lasted nearly one day. He was a short life span Buddha that put a lot of effort in his teaching (the busiest man on earth). This gives us a lot of inspiration. It was also the period of degeneration (the human life span is only 100 years and it will decline to ten years) and humans had thick kilesa (defilement). So, it was difficult to teach them.

Therefore, he has to work very hard for it. He had to do a lot quickly.

In 45 years, all Dhamma duties were completed and at last he laid down his khandha.

The last teaching was on about a diamond Dhamma. Dhamma arose for the challenging of the world (loka). The world is led by ignorance and craving, it's the suffering world (dukkha loka). Dhamma arose for the extinguishing of all the heat.

The Buddha extracted the essence of Dhamma from his 45 years of teaching was very short that you have to take it everywhere with it and can be used anyplace. It has included only for reflection and action. All conditioned phenomena are subject to decay. This is reflection or contemplation. Live your life with heedfulness, and this is action.

After the breakfast, we eat again at noon and later for dinner. So, we are busy with eating, clothing and living for oneself by moving around. Our life is for searching things, and then we get it; after that, it has gone and left with tiredness. Does it have any meaning?

Can we call or take it as the essence of life? You have to use knowledge (ñāṇa) to reflect them. It becomes clear if you can observe its impermanence, suffering and not-self (i.e., anicca, dukkha and anatta). All the businesses (worldly busy matters) are only guests. They have no guarantees. It's important to get the power of life which is the appamāda or wholesome merits. Sati with ñāṇa (knowledge) is called appamāda.

When you're sick, instead of in groaning, put sati in it. Dukkha becomes more distinct when we're sick. (with ñāṇa). There are two kinds of pain: knowledge pain and ignorant pain (or knowing pain and unknowing pain). You have to accept them with the knowing pain.

This kind of pain will send you to Nibbāna. Because it's only physical pain and no mental pain. All these will become host numbers.

We can extract five meanings from the Burmese word—Sein (i.e., Diamond). These are:

① Sein-ta-lone mango (Diamond mango)

This is the best in all mangoes and the best taste. Sati can transform the khandha without essence to the essence one. It's better than a diamond mango (i.e., sensual pleasure or happiness). It transforms kilesa into essential dhammas. It transforms mental suffering (dukkha) into mental happiness, etc.

② Sein-khor (challenge)

You can't challenge anyone if don't have strength. It's number one in sāsana, and can challenge all. There are also challenges at international level. [These are not good signs and nowadays it's becoming worse and worse. This is a bad omen for the whole world.

Among super-powers, they are challenging or competing each other with greed, hatred and delusion. These are: how to get more money in economics and trade wars; how to get more power with the weapon of mass destruction (arms race); how to pollute the food chains, air, water and earth—the natural environments; how to make the Earth hotter and hotter; how to make humans afflicted with new diseases (e.g., 2019-2020 corona Virus or Covid 19—Here we can see the stupidity of world leaders; instead of dealing with the epidemic in unity, they are finding faults and accusations to each other.); etc. All these are wrong challenges.]

Even animals are challenging each other. Two dogs show their teeth and bark angrily when they are challenging each other, and then they bite each other noisily. At last both of them hurt and become tired. (It seems some politicians and some world leaders are imitating them as their teachers.)

Sati conquers all of them. Sitting meditation is challenging kilesa. You have to watch and observe the khandha : “Is there anything of goodness coming out from it?”

Instead, everything coming out is not good, it responds to us like an enemy. Only dukkha comes out from it (i.e. anicca, dukkha, anatta, asubha and dukkha sacca). In the time of the Buddha, 30 monks went into a forest for practice. One night a tiger came and dragged a young monk into the deep forest. The tiger seemed like challenging the monk as: “You can’t run away from me.” The monk seemed to challenge back it as saying: “You can only eat my putrid khandha and not my sati and ñāṇa” Khandha is for application (but most people are using it at wrong places). The monk became arahant before death.

Only his khandha died and not the Dhamma.

③ Diamond as a valuable gem

Sein (diamond) is a valuable gem; sati is also the most valuable Dhamma.

The reason is it can transform the useless khandha into priceless sīla, samādhi and paññā power. Therefore, sati can be called as sein-ta-lone (a diamond). [In the Mahāyana tradition, diamond is represented wisdom, e.g., Diamond Sutra or Vajira Sutra. Sayadaw’s diamond is nothing to do with it and it’s just a coincidence. The Buddha referred sati to salt in every dishes. Ven Sāriputta compared Ven. Mahā-Moggallāna with a mountain and in return, Ven. Mahā-Moggallāna compared Ven Sāriputta with salt. There are profound meanings hidden underneath of these two comparisons of psychic power and wisdom power.]

④ Sein-phu-the Holy Crystal

The holy crystal (sein-phu) is the topmost crystal of a cetiya or a pagoda, it’s like a lotus-bud and some of them are decorated with gold, silver and many types of gem stones (e.g., Shwe-da-gon Pagoda in Rangoon). Sati also like sein-phu and should place it at the top of Dhamma

⑤ Sein-pyaung /Mortar

The Burmese word for mortar is sein-pyaung. Why sati is like a mortar?
A mortar can shoot a target. In the same way sati can do its task.

The khandha is very near us, but we can’t see its anicca, dukkha and anatta.

Sati can shoot the refined targets which are far away in the past, present and future.

“Without sati, without knowledge and one cannot fulfill one’s wishes

Keeping sati forever and have a joyful and peaceful life.”

[Sayadaw was very skillful in composing short verses or poems in his Dhamma teachings, he made the listener to remember the important points. Here was an example.]

Even it's a bad time of an era if we possess a Diamond/sein-ta-lone and not a bad time for us. (Appamāda covers all the wholesome dhammas from the fundamentals to the highest Dhamma—i.e., Nibbāna. It's very important to study all the teachings connecting with it in the suttas by thorough contemplation and use it in our daily life. In this way, Buddhists can become the most blessed human beings on earth. All the sayings by the Buddha in the Dhammapada, Chapter II Appamādavagga were very good for reflection and become a wise person.)

Appamāda is heedfulness. Here is being heedful in wholesome dhammas, mainly referred to worldly good deeds or merits. Appamāda is also mindfulness, and it can be covered the whole piṭakas. This is not an ordinary heedfulness, being heedful in wholesomeness. It means always doing and performing in goodness.

We should have steadfastness in doing good. This is not ordinary mindfulness and difficult to arise. Therefore, it has to be developed. Without mindfulness and knowledge cannot be arisen. Therefore, there is no discernment or wisdom without mindfulness.

This kind of discernment or wisdom is not ordinary knowledge. It is thoroughly penetrating of natural phenomena. For the goodness to arise and realization of the Nibbāna element, we cannot be without mindfulness. In daily life must cultivate mindfulness and clear knowing (sati and sampajañña). Near death also we cannot be without it. Heedfulness (appamāda) has different levels; these are giving, precept, mind development (dāna; sīla, bhāvanā).

In bhāvanā—mind development also has different levels; from sotāpanna to arahant. Only by becoming an arahant that heedfulness is perfected. It is very important for everyone to ask the question of why are we here and what are we doing here (i.e., in human existence)? People will give different answers. Even some do not know the answers. Common worldly people will have different views and opinions, depending on their desires.

People with different faiths also in the same ways. With the Buddha's Teachings, Buddhists can give two general answers for this very important question. For the worldly people, they are for enjoying sensual pleasures and doing things to enjoy

them. Different religious people are also for sensual pleasures and doing things to union with their God in heaven after death.

True Buddhists have different views, and they have clear guidelines and clear paths for what to do. According to Buddha, human births are rare, and the best place for doing good is also the human world. Human beings have more chances and opportunities than any other births. The most important thing to do now is studying and following the Buddha's Teachings to end dukkha. This is the highest thing to be done here. At least as a Buddhist one should or must do good deeds and abstain and refrain from misdeeds.

To complete and fulfill the Buddhist task, we have to develop being mindful of the qualities of the mind. We must live a life with heedfulness (*appamāda*). *Appamāda* is so important in the Buddha's Teachings that every day he was reminding the monks to be mindful or being in heedfulness. Before he passed away, the last words of the Buddha were also in heedfulness: *Vayadhammā saṅkhārā-appamādena sampādettha*: All conditioned phenomena are subject to decay; bring about completion by being heedful.

Therefore, being heedful of the qualities of the mind is very important in worldly progress and spiritual development. In the *Dhammapada*: on the section of heedfulness, the Buddha compared a person with heedfulness/non-negligence and the person with heedlessness/negligence as a person awake and a person in sleep; a racehorse and a common weak horse.

Heedfulness is the way to Deathless, and heedlessness is the way to Death. Those who are heedful do not die and who are heedless as if already dead. A person with diligence, heedfulness, pure in thoughts and words or deeds will do everything with care and consideration. With restraining of the senses, he earns his livelihood by the wholesomeness that the fame and fortune of this heedful person will increase.

The foolish and the ignorant give themselves to over heedlessness, whereas the wise treasures heedfulness as a precious jewel. Someone delights in heedfulness and seeing the danger in heedlessness advances as a like fire burning up all the fetters (*saṃyojana*). Someone delights in heedfulness and seeing the danger in heedlessness cannot fall away from the Path. In practice to transcend dukkha; it is important for the five spiritual faculties to develop and mature. These are:

- (1) The faculty of conviction—*saddhindriya*
- (2) The faculty of persistence—*viriyindriya*
- (3) The faculty of mindfulness—*satindriya*

- (4) The faculty of concentration—samādhindriya
- (5) The faculty of discernment—paññindriya.

Of the five faculties, conviction(saddhā) and discernment have to be in balance. Persistence (viriya) and concentration (samādhi) also have to be in balance. Only mindfulness (sati) is no need to be in balance but stronger and better. Sati is also like salt crystals in every food. Sati is necessary for everything we do. Therefore, the Buddha was always reminding and encouragement to develop it.

On Dhamma level, the very important knowledge is not forgotten or not negligent the true nature of the khandha. Its true nature is changing (vipariṇāma), inconstant (anicca), suffering (dukkha), not-self (anatta), and loathsomeness (asubha). These are aging, sickness, and death dhammas that we should not forget them. After some time, everything will fall apart. With regular contemplation, we are not wasting times and living a meaningless life.

Especially we should not forget about death with the contemplation of death (maraṇānussati). Without negligence on death also leads to non-negligence of wholesome dhammas, merits, etc. It protects us from doing evil deeds and matters. And then we do only what is proper, useful, beneficial to oneself and others. Regular mindfulness on death can lead to the ending of dukkha—i.e., Nibbāna.

Death can be compared to a big river flows into the sea, but they also have differences. The water flows down slowly, and it is becoming closer to the sea. In the same way, everyone with times goes on is closer to death. The differences are; we can measure the journey of the river to the sea and period it arrives there. But we cannot measure on death. Now how much time still left for us to continue for this life.

Even everyone has a different life span, and not everybody the same way. It depends on different factors and causes. Some of these related to past karmas and some to present factors and causes, such as action, mind state, climate, and foods. It is nothing to do with God or the outside power. The most important factor is the internal cause—the mind. Therefore, every human being can change his or her destiny. It can be better or worse.

Therefore, the Buddha's Teachings came in to give us the guidelines and show the way. Without the Buddha arose in the human world even we do not know very clear about the wholesome and unwholesome dhamma, do not say about to transcend them. Therefore, the Buddha was called the Teacher of gods and human beings. In the Buddhist text, there are four factors of not knowing about death.

These are the time of death, the illness or death, the destination of rebirth, and the place of death. Among the four factors, the most important one is after death, the destination of rebirth, or new existence. Combine the 31 realms of the existence, and we only get the five existences. These are hells, animals, ghosts, humans, and deities. Only two groups, human and deity existences, are good rebirths.

The other three, hells, animals, and ghosts existences are very painful and miserable. To have a good rebirth and existence, everyone should be heedful of the qualities of the mind by doing good and developing the mind with the practice of bhāvanā in this life. In the Theravada Buddhist tradition, monks and teachers always encourage us to practice the four protective dhamma regularly in our daily life.

These are Buddhānussati (Recollection of the Buddha), Metta Bhāvanā (meditation on goodwill/loving kindness/ loving friendliness), Asubha Bhāvanā (meditation on the repulsiveness of the body) and Maraṇānussati (mindfulness on death). These contemplations are called caturārakkha dhamma, the four protective dhammas. With the regular practices can protect someone from fear, dangers, unwholesome mental states, and living a heedful life.

In the Sutta Nipāta, there are three suttas for mettā bhāvanā, contemplation on the repulsiveness of the body and mindfulness on death respectively.

In the Snake Chapter; Metta Sutta—Discourse on Good Will (Snp. 1.8) and Vijaya Sutta—Discourse on Victory (victory over delusion or overcome attachment on the physical body, Snp. 1.11). In the Great Chapter; Salla Sutta—Discourse on the Arrow (Mindfulness on death, Snp. 3.8), all these are very good for contemplation.

Already we have mentioned that there are many different levels, from the worldly results to spiritual attainments, for being heedful of the qualities of the mind. We have to cultivate and develop both and should not stop only at the worldly level. Any worldly level and progress are unstable and can be changed.

Only the spiritual level is safe and leading to the ending of dukkha. Here I want to present a story in the Dhammapada about mindfulness on death—maraṇānussati—the great result it brought to a weaver girl. Not forgetting on death reminds someone not to follow one's life in ordinary and useless ways. It sharpens one's knowledge and develops the right thoughts or thinking. Therefore, maraṇānussati is a very useful meditation object for mundane and supramundane achievements.

It is also very close to the Noble Truth. With the regular contemplation, it reduces greed, hatred, and delusion. Also, it helps someone come to the sense of wise

urgency (saṁvega) regarding the fleeting nature of the world, suffering, and unsatisfactoriness of the world. With the saṁvega knowledge; he will not waste the human life span, and it encourages him for the practice to end dukkha. All the Buddha's Teaching is not for intellectual knowledge, but we have to put into real practice, whether it is worldly or spiritual.

The story of the weaver girl supported this view. This mind development (bhāvanā) develops the wholesome roots of non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion. It supports these three wholesome roots. It also relates to heedfulness (appamāda.) It develops the perception of inconstant (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anatta). It is helping to discern anicca, dukkha, and anatta of the three universal characteristics of the mind and body and their true nature.

The story of a weaver girl (Pesakāradhītāvatthu)

At that time the Buddha was residing in the country of Āḷavi. At the end of an alms-giving ceremony, he delivered a discourse on the inconstancy of the khandhas. He taught the people to be always mindful and put effort to perceive the true nature of the khandhas. With the practice, it was like armed with a weapon to meet a poisonous snake—i.e., Death. One who was ever mindful of death would face death mindfully.

And after death would have a good rebirth. In the audience was a 16 years old girl who understood the message and took it seriously, and practiced the teaching regularly. After three years had passed by. One day the Buddha was as usual surveyed the world to help living beings. He saw the young weaver woman (now 19) in his vision and knew that the time was ripe for her spiritual attainment. Three years ago, she had received the meditation on death from the Buddha.

She had done the practice regularly for three years now. Her perfection for the realization of the Dhamma was becoming mature. It was like a lotus bud waiting for the sunlight to open it up. Her mind was free from mental hindrances. Therefore, the Buddha went back to the country of Āḷavi for the second time to help her. She heard the news of the Buddha arrived and went to listen to his teaching.

On the same day, her father had also asked her to wind some thread spools which he needed urgently. So, she also took them together with her. She listened to the Buddha's talk among the crowd. He also knew that the woman would die when she arrived in the weaving shed. So, the Buddha invited her came closer to him. And then he was asking her the following four questions.

Q. “Where have you come from?”

A: “I don’t know Ven. Sir.”

Q. “Where are you going?”

A: “I don’t know Ven.”

Q. “Don’t you know?”

A: “Yes, I do Ven. Sir.”

Q. “Do you know?”

A: “I don’t know Ven.”

These were not ordinary questions and answers as most people thought. Only the Buddha and the young woman knew them. So, the Buddha asked her to explain to them. The direct questions and answers of them were as follow.

Q. “From what past existence you have come here?”

A: “I don’t know.”

Q. “To what future existence you would be going from here?”

A: “I don’t know.”

Q. “Whether you don’t know that you would die one day?”

A: “Yes, I do.”

Q. “Whether you know when you would die?”

A: “I don’t.”

The Buddha was satisfied with her explanations. And then spoke the following verse: Verse 174: “Blind is the people of the world, and only a few see them. Just like only a few birds escape from the net. So, only a few get to the world of deities and realize Nibbāna.” At the end of the talk, the young weaver entered the Stream (became a stream-winner). Then she continued the way to her father weaving shed.

When she got there, her father was asleep and suddenly woke up by her arrival. And then accidentally pulled the shuttle and the point of it struck his daughter’s chest, she died on the spot, and he was in broken-heart. With great sorrow and pain, he went to see the Buddha. The Buddha with Dhamma talk lightened his sorrow and pain. He had strong saṃvega (sense of wise urgency) and entered the monastic order. ([Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā](#), 13. Lokavaggo, 7. Pesakāradhītāvattu, DhA. iii. 170-6)

With diligent practice and he became an arahant. Once, King Pasenadi of Kosala asked the Buddha a question: “Is there anyone dhamma in the world could complete and fulfill one’s goal in the present and future.” the Buddha short answer was—Appamāda Dhamma—Being heedful of the qualities of the mind. This is the highest protection with a blessing.

21. Respect

The commentary explained it as showing respect in the appropriate way towards Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, disciples of the Buddha (from ariya disciples to ordinary monks or saṅgha), one's teacher and preceptor (i.e., for a monk); towards parents (father and mother), towards elder brother and sister, and towards others (e.g., old people).

The result of respect, reverence, veneration is good rebirth (human and heavenly worlds) If born as human will be in a higher-class family.

In quite a few suttas the Buddha mentioned non-decline of a Buddhist monk. One sutta was in the Book of seven, Aṅguttara Nikāya. Sutta 32: Appamāda— 'There a deity came to the Buddha and told him the seven qualities of respect or reverence which are possessed by a monk who would not decline.

These were: respectful towards the Buddha, Dhammas, Saṅgha, Samādhi, the training, appamāda and holding hospitality in reverence.

The Buddha agreed with him and retold this episode to the monks. Therefore, respect is not only with human beings but includes wholesome dhammas. Human beings do not respect to wholesome dhammas so that there are a lot of human problems and suffering arising in societies. So, the Buddha said, respect or reverence was a blessing.

We must show respect to respectable people, and it is a noble state of mind. It is a praiseworthy action in this life. And in the next life will have the result of a good and noble life. Therefore, it has good results in this life and after. The objects of respect are; the Three Noble Treasures of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha (Tiratana or Ratanattaya), one's parents, one's teachers, people who are older than us (especially old aged people), people have noble qualities and someone has gratitude on you.

The action of showing respect to respectable people supports the development of Brahmavihāra Dhamma—love (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), appreciative joy (mudita) and equanimity (upekkhā) for both sides. So, both sides have benefits. The action of showing respect has four benefits; longevity, beauty, happiness, and strength (mind and body strength). These results were mentioned by the Buddha in a discourse. This story was in the Dhammapada: The Thousand (Sahassavagga).

The story of Āyuvaddhanakumāra

A couple had a son and took him to see the Buddha. They paid obeisance to the Buddha, and he said to the parents only by “May you live long.” Then the Buddha predicted the impending death of their son. To prevent his early death, he advised them to build a pavilion at the entrance of their home. Put the child on a couch in the pavilion. Invited the monks to recite the Parittas—Protective Charms for seven days there.

On the 7th day, the Buddha himself came, followed by deities from all over the universe. At that time an ogre named Avaruddhaka came there, waiting for the chance to take the child away. With many deities were arriving at the scene, the ogre had to retreat backward to give way, and he was very far away from the child. For the whole night, the recitation of parittas was going on, and then protected the child’s life.

The next day the parents took their son to see the Buddha. After the child paid respect to the Buddha, he said to him, “May you live long.” The Buddha also said that he would live up to 120 years and named him Āyuvaddhana. The child grew up, and one day with his companions went to see the Buddha and the saṅgha.

The monks recognized him and asked the Buddha; “For being is there any means of gaining longevity?” The Buddha’s answer was by respecting and honoring the elders, wise and virtuous people would gain longevity, beauty, happiness, and strength.

Then the Buddha spoke the following verse: Verse 109: “Someone always respects and honors those who are older and virtuous, the four benefits of longevity, beauty, happiness, and strength will increase.”

At the end of the talk, Āyuvaddhana and his companions entered the Stream. The actions of respect and honor are always practicing by the wise and noble people. We must know and understand what is valuable as valuable and must respect those who are respectable. We should have the right attitudes if not, will lose protection and blessing.

Ven. Sāriputta was ideal in this respect, and the most lovely human being on earth. (See—The biography of Ven. Sāriputta by Nyanaponika Thera) Every night Ven. Sāriputta paid respect to the direction of his first true teacher, Ven. Assaji (Ven. Assaji was the youngest of the pañcavaggika who listened to the Discourse of the

Turning the Wheel of Dhamma. Sañjaya was his first teacher but belonged to an outside sect) and laid down his head towards the direction of Ven. Assaji. Some monks misunderstood his behavior. The first time, when he met Ven. Assaji, who was on his alms-round, admired his noble demeanor. He knew that Ven. Assaji was something special from others whom he had met before. Therefore, Sāriputta requested him for his teaching.

Ven. Assaji gave him a short verse on the teaching of cause and effect. After this short instruction and Sāriputta entered the Stream (became a sotāpanna). For Dhamma teaching, long or short is not important. The importance is its effectiveness. Mostly with long teaching and we do not get much benefit from it. In this respect with wise contemplation, we know that worldly matters and knowledge are wasting our times and life span.

Everything has their causes, and by stopping the causes and the result will stop. Craving (taṇhā) is the cause of suffering (dukkha). By destroying craving and dukkha will be ceased. By entering the stream, Sāriputta had strong gratitude and respect on his first true teacher Ven. Assaji. For wise and noble people, we have to focus on their noble qualities by respecting and honoring them. If we know and understand more and more Dhamma, our respect to the Three Noble Treasures— the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha are becoming greater.

Among monks, paying respect is according to seniority in rain years (vassas). Among common people, paying respect is according to older age or old people (e.g., younger siblings to older siblings.) Sometimes we pay respect to people for their knowledge and moral integrity. There was a jātika story about three animals; a small bird, an elephant, and a monkey, on the matter of respect.

Three of them relied on a great banyan tree. One day they met together and discussed the matter of paying respect to others by their ages. The elephant mentioned that when he was young, he passed through this small banyan tree underneath his stomach. The monkey said that when he was young, he used to eat the buds of the banyan tree.

The small bird told them that when he was young, there was no banyan tree at the same spot. Only after he ate the fruits of banyan from another place and excreted it at the same spot and this banyan tree grew out from the seeds of the excreta. Therefore, the small bird was the oldest of them. So, the day onwards the elephant and the monkey had to pay respect to the bird. (These three animals were the past lives of Ven. Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna and the bodhisatta).

The most important matter on the subject of respect is our attitudes to one's parents and teachers. More important of the two is showing respect and honoring to one's parent. If someone harmed one's parents, the result of misdeed is heavier than to a teacher. For example, someone kills his parents and his teacher, the killing of one's parents and after death for sure to fall into the hell existence in next life.

We should not doubt about it, because the Buddha himself mentioned it. From today media, we know some incidents very unpleasant to see, as to how some people treat their parents. There was more news about killing parents, beating, cursing and treating them very badly. When I was young, I never heard or seen these evil and ingratitude actions and behaviors in families.

These are the signs of decadence and bad omens for human societies. If these kinds of evil deeds and behaviors going on like this will become a bad culture and leading to the destruction of human beings. Respect, gratitude and honor to one's parents and teachers are the foundation of goodness to arise. The Buddha himself had high regards about it and praised its qualities. Maybe this was one of the foundation and important cause for Chinese culture and civilization survived up to this day for over 3,000 years.

But other great cultures and civilizations were disappeared. With the foundation of goodness on respect, gratitude, honoring and duties to one's parents and teachers develop love, kindness, appreciate joy, considerations for others truly bring happiness, peace and progress for human beings. This was one of the reasons why Chinese sages and noble beings paid attention and emphasis on it as a very important training and education.

Another has to be showed respect and gratitude is our teachers. This point is also very weak in nowadays societies. The young and the youth treat their teachers as equal and treat them as friends. Sometimes even worse than to a friend and it becomes very rude. They tease their teacher physically or verbally in the classrooms. A student no respect and gratitude to his teacher will never progress in the study and goodness.

Nowadays many teachers complain that students are difficult to teach and train, in the east or the west. The main reason is we use some modern views, such as—equality, human right, democracy, etc. in the wrong and unwholesome ways. Therefore, all these create problems and difficulties in family life and school. With wrong views and ideas in mind creates difficulty to teach and train the children and the students in the right and wholesome directions. It is like catching a poisonous snake—cobra or viper in the wrong way. Instead of grasping its head, we grasp on

the tail.

If we use these sweet views and ideas, wrongly and improper ways increase the egocentricity, greed, hatred and delusion. And it will create negative results. We can see all these problems in politics, economics, societies, etc. It also likes a knife—it can become a tool for work or kill people. Therefore, the matter of respect or the results of respect is not small wholesome dhamma.

This quality has to be developed when people are still very young and should start from family life. Even we do not have respect and concern for our parents and teachers; there will be no hope on others. So, the Buddha emphasized it as protection with a blessing.

22. Humility

The English Dictionary explains humility as—someone who has humility is not proud (conceit) and does not believe that they are better than others. Another word—humble has the same meaning. The commentary explained it as meekness and humble behaviour, someone without conceit and vanity. It has the nature of quiet and easily controlled, tenderness, soft-spoken, etc. The commentary gave the examples of like a ragged-cloth, a beggar, a defanged-snake, a bull with broken horns, etc. The result of humility is fame (it is certain that there are other results). The opposite nature of humility is proud and conceit. The outcome of very proud and conceited can be very serious; e.g., the renegade monk Devadatta and the brahmin girl Māgandiyā. The monk Devadatta after achieving of super-normal power (psychic power) became conceited and craving for fame and power, he opposed the Buddha. He became so proud and conceited and without paying heed to the Buddha's admonition. At last, he was swallowed by the earth and fell into the great Hell—Avīci for his evil actions.

The young Māgandiyā was beautiful and very proud of her beauty. Her parents offered her to the Buddha. The Buddha, seeing the parents' spiritual faculties were mature, gave them a short exhortation by using their daughters body as loathsome and putrid. After the saying both parents became anāgāmis and entered the orders, later both became arahants. But the young Māgandiyā became very bitter and sore because it hurt her strong conceit which related to her beauty. She vowed to take revenge. Later she became one of the chief queens of King Udena. When the Buddha stayed in Kosambī where King Udena reigned, she had the chance to take her revenge on the Buddha. At last, all her attempts were failed, and she encountered with a miserable death. Here we can see the danger and harm of strong conceit which brings misfortune to someone.

The opposite nature of humility is conceit or pride (māna). Everyone has conceit (māna). It is one of the latent dispositions (anusaya) and one of the defilement (kilesa). Māna is eradicated only at the stage of arhatship. It uses to happen in people who have a fortune, beauty, highly educated, high status, etc. Without any of them, also people can have pride.

Some take pride in their youthfulness, healthiness, life faculty (live a longer life; yobbana-mada, ārogya-mada, jīvita-mada), etc. The qualities of respect and humility are connected. Someone has conceit (no humility) cannot show respect to others. And without respect means someone has conceit. Therefore, they are supporting

each other. Conceit has the nature of rigidity. A rigid person cannot or will not change his attitudes, opinions, or behavior.

So, they are difficult to teach or admonish. It is also a cause for downfall and dislike by others. A person has the quality of humility loved by others. It also increases or develops the wholesome dhamma to a holy life (brahmacariya dhamma). The quality of humility is the nature of noble and wise people. In textbooks, it taught us to behave like a rag for wiping feet or a poisonous snake which fangs are broken or a bull with broken horns.

Ven. Sāriputta was a very good example as a humble person. In the Dhammapada, there was a story described his great quality of humility. It was the end of a rain retreat (vassa), Ven. Sāriputta was about to set out a journey. He was saying goodbye to some monks and passing a young bhikkhu without saying anything to him.

But his outer robe brushed against this monk body when he was passing through him. This young monk had conceit and also wanted Ven. Sāriputta to pay attention to him. Therefore, bore some grudge against him and approached the Buddha. He complained to the Buddha that Ven. Sāriputta had abused him.

The Buddha, therefore, sent for Sāriputta and questioned him about the complaint. He answered that how could a monk who steadfastly kept his mind on the body, not apologized to a fellow monk after had done something wrong. He was like the earth with no feeling of like or dislike when flowers and rubbish piled on it. He was also like the rag cloth, the beggar, a bull with broken horns, etc. (There were nine examples).

The-pye-kan Sayadaw gave a natural example. Rice plants when they are young and immature, the stalks are at upright positions. After they are grown up and laden with rice grain, the stalks are bending down. These are the differences between a fool and a wise, or someone has conceit and someone has humility.

There was another story about Ven. Sāriputta of showing his humility to a 7-year-old young novice. One time the robe of Ven. Sāriputta was not very neat and a 7-year-old young novice saw it. And he informed it to Sāriputta. On the spot, Sāriputta corrected his robe by readjusting it instantly. He humbly asked the novice as was it good enough. Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Rāhula (The only son of the Buddha) were high-class persons with great wisdom and very humble nature if a person has conceit and difficulty to possess good qualities.

If a person becomes wiser and he will become humbler. By knowing more about the

faults of the khandha (body) one's conceit will be decreased, and then he will look for the refuge. We cannot find it externally. Most people are looking for outside that they would never find it. Most religions came from external searches and speculations.

At last most people will die without the true refuge. When still alive, they encounter a lot of difficulty and problems which they cannot solve or overcome by outside powers. The perfect or true refuge is wisdom (paññā), which is the internal quality of the mind. Everybody has it, and only we need to develop it.

Therefore, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha (ariya saṅgha) are the perfect or true refuge. They represent only one thing—which is perfect wisdom. In general, true everyone refuge is the wholesome dhammas such as dāna, sīla, samādhi and paññā. These are not the outside powers and sensual pleasures which most people rely on it.

Generally speaking, the outside powers and external things/matters are untrue and belong to the fleeting nature. These things can be deluded our mind and created a lot of problems and sufferings in the world and societies. These unfortunate things are happening around us, which we can see in today world. Violence, terrorism, wars in the name of religion and power and all kinds of pollution (mind, body and nature) in the name of economics for sensual pleasures and overindulgence.

All these miserable things are created by fools and not the wise. The quality of humility or without conceit is one of the characteristics of great wisdom. Therefore, everyone should develop this noble quality. So, the Buddha said; humility was the highest protection with a blessing.

23. Contentment

The commentary only commented it with the monastic life. Even though lay people are living a lifestyle very different from the monks, it can be beneficial by knowing the contentment of monk life taught by the Buddha. There are many things and dhammas in them which can develop our mind in accordance with the wholesome dhammas.

We have already seen it in the Gavesi Sutta—he was a lay disciple of the Buddha Kassapa. He and his followers were competing each other in dhamma challenges—sīla, samādhi and paññā—their spiritual level developed up to the highest level of arahantship. In today's Buddhist countries, there are still some upāsakas living a lifestyle that is very close to the monks and developing their minds. By studying and observing the monks, we can adjust the Dhamma accordingly to our daily lifestyle. (e.g., how the monks relate to nature is interesting. It is animate or inanimate things—always with harmlessness, care and consideration. These qualities and behaviours are urgently needed and very important for today's human race.

If the world—earth is becoming inhabitable, it is not the fault of the monks. It is totally the faults of stupid, foolish, ignorant and greedy people who are only thinking about themselves). Therefore, here, we can see the important wholesome Dhamma of contentment.

Here the commentary referred to contentment with requisites of any kind. Nowadays there are many things which are really unnecessary and mostly like rubbish. With the human's extravagance of uncountable things, how to solve the waste matters is really a very head-ache with great problems. The commentary explained the monk's four requisites with contentment; i.e., robes, foods, dwellings and medicines.

The commentary divided each requisite into three types and with the four requisites, it became 12-fold.

These three types were:

1. Contentment according to one's gain,
2. according to one's ability and
3. according to suitability.

On robes:

1. A monk receives a robe, and it can be good or bad quality. He has to keep with it and not desire for another one. He does not accept another one even has the chance to get another. This is contentment according to one's gain.

2. Receiving a heavy robe which is made with thick cloth. By wearing it has difficulty and discomfort because of the heavy robe. So, he exchanges with another monk with his lighter robe. This is contentment with one's ability.

3. Receiving an expensive good quality of robe and the monk thinks that the robe is suitable for elders long gone forth, virtuous, and highly learned, etc.

So, he offers to them and looks for a cheaper robe. This is contentment according to suitability.

The other requisites of alms food, dwelling (lodging) and medicines are also understood in these ways as mentioned above. The contentment with the four requisites in these ways is a blessing for a monk because it can abandon bad qualities of excessive desire evil desire, etc. The practice of contentment leads to good rebirth and development of the holy life.

Here I want to extract the teaching on content by Sayadaw Dr. Nandamalar-bhivamsa for contemplation. He had given two talks on it. The first one explained about contentment and discontent, the second on contentment in general.

In English dictionary, contentment is a feeling of quiet happiness and satisfaction, discontent is the feeling of being not satisfied with one's situation.

There are two questions arising: "where should one have contentment?" and "where should one have discontent?". Contentment is one of the characteristics of a true yogi.

Contentment with everything is not good. It has related to possession of material things. It does not mean possession of material things is bad, or you should not search for them.

We should control greediness or over greediness searching for things in wholesome and lawful ways are good. Whoever has very greedy nature, the monk or layman, he will be disgusted and blamed by others. The Buddha compared a greedy person with examples of a big fire and ocean.

A big fire will burn everything whatever put into it, and never stop burning.

(Fire as a simile for greediness is not only burning the mind but also the physical world. The dangers coming from global warming are describing the over greediness or discontent of nowadays human beings.) Whatever water flows into the ocean from the land will never overflow. Human's desire or greediness is never enough and it will always: "I want more! I want more!" (Human's over exploitation of the earth resources has not finished yet and even now they are planning to outer space for the same purpose.) Someone has discontent and too choosy even their parents cannot bear it.

Discontent with wholesome dhammas (i.e., merits) is good indeed. (i.e., merits related to sīla, samādhi and paññā). Searching, learning and studying on knowledge and wisdom should not have contentment. (These include worldly knowledge, but it should be wholesome and using them wisely and property. If not it will destroy or harm humans.) Then all these become wrong knowledges. With more knowledge and education is better.

It can be used for the welfare and well-being of human race. Merits or wholesome Dhammas can be divided into different types, from the basic to higher levels. (e.g. sīla, samādhi and paññā). Developing out merits like a ladder going up higher and higher. (It does not mean that we should do it one by one. For example, giving dāna and at the same time observe sīla and doing meditation.)

Merits can be divided into three types according to their qualities; such as

- ① Sense sphere merits—kāmāvacara kusala
- ② Sublime merits—mahaggata kusala
- ③ Supramundane merit— lokuttara kusala (i.e., understand it like the neither black nor white kamma)

① For common and the majority of people, sense sphere merits are more important and easier to perform. To have better results understanding about them is necessary.

It can be divided into eight kinds depending on the following six factors:

- (1) associated with knowledge
- (2) dissociates from knowledge (with or without knowledge)
- (3) accompanied by joy
- (4) accompanied by equanimity (with or without joy)
- (5) prompted
- (6) unprompted

By combining, we get the eight kinds of consciousness related to merits ($2 \times 2 = 4 \times 2 = 8$) as follows:

1. With knowledge and joy, unprompted
2. With knowledge and joy, prompted
3. no knowledge, with joy, unprompted
4. no knowledge, with joy, prompted
5. with knowledge, no joy, unprompted
6. with knowledge, no joy, prompted
7. no knowledge, no joy, unprompted
8. no knowledge, no joy, prompted

Therefore, by performing merits with the best mental states is very important.

The first kind of merits with knowledge and joy, unprompted will get the best results.

The eighth kind of merits with no knowledge and no joy, prompted will get the inferior results. (Knowledge on Abhidhamma teaching is very important. It can let us understand the teaching of sutta more clearly and profoundly; so that we can use the teaching of sutta to have the better results in our future life.) Someone can do the merits skillfully is so important that even we can observe and see some of its good results in some animals. For example, the pets (dogs or cats) belong to very rich people (i.e. millionaire, billionaire).

Some years ago, there was an interesting news in the West. A very rich old lady had a pet cat and when she died leaving behind a lot of money for her beloved cat as an inheritance. I am quite sure this cat life was a lot better than most ordinary people. With excellent dāna and sīla, beings can take rebirths in heavenly realm. It can take rebirths as human beings with lesser qualities.

(At last Sayadaw talked about the merits of sublime (samatha) and supramundane up to the highest level—arahantship.) All these merits can be possible only with discontent. Therefore, we have to follow accordingly to the Buddha Dhamma. Greedy in material matters is not good. Merits (kusala dhamma) is good because it is non-greed (alobha). (Foolish people are discontent in unwholesomeness—akusala dhamma, but they have contentment in wholesomeness—kusala dhamma. Today world is similar to this situation.)

In the second talk on contentment in general was as follows. Contentment is a noble quality of a noble being so it can be called as a noble way or practice, which also mentioned by the Buddha. In the loving-kindness discourse the Buddha mentioned

some qualities the yogi should have—one of them was contentment. This was not difficult to understand why a yogi who develops mettā should have contentment. Contentment is an antidote of greediness. How can a greedy person develop mettā? (The four divine-abiding: mettā, karuṇā, mudita and upekkhā are connecting dhamma) Contentment with one's own things (especially the four requisites—necessities; robes, foods, dwellings and medicines) is the way of noble people. In all the human possessions, contentment was the best possession as the Buddha said. Contentment with one's own thing, one do not want the things that belong to others and this is a peaceful way. People encounter suffering because of no contentment. No contentment with one's property that he desires to own other's property (e.g., in olden China, wealthy landowners using many dirty tricks to get poor farmer's lands). With discontent, they expect other things which they do not have, because of that (desire and craving) encounter mental suffering. If wanting a happy and peaceful life have to follow the way of contentment. Humans have a lot of discontent that their minds become hotter with kilesa fire (This is one of the signs or causes for global warming coming from the over-greedy minds of human).

The Buddha said, that if people became happy with the possession of material things, then having contentment would bring happiness. (This is indeed true; the lives of monks and Bhutanese people are very good evidences. A simple lifestyle with enough of the four requisites is a true blessing.) Because of contentment do not want to own others' properties (i.e., evil desire). Contentment with what one's has that not desiring or craving for other things. The opposite of contentment is strong desire, strong craving and very greedy. This is the cause of suffering. (When will the present Covid-19 end? we still do not know; this incident is a very good evidence. Humans already have a lot of meat consumption for everyday by many types of meat production, they still discontent with it. Because of discontent in meat consuming, we kill wild animals from the forest, which bring this dangerous virus to human race. The African Ebola-virus also had the same problem. When will humans take a great lesson from it? All the grave and miserable consequence came or started from the non-contentment or discontent.) Therefore, contentment suppresses greed (lobha) and the blessed Dhamma.

(Sayadaw talked about the monk four requisites of robes, foods, dwellings and medicines). These four requisites are the minimum necessities for the survival of a monk life. This will also true for lay people. Robes or clothes for protecting the body from heat, cold, mosquitoes, gnats, other insects bite, wind and the sun and cover-up the naked body, etc. But it is not for beautifying the body. It is very important with the right and proper motivations for doing things. Otherwise, humans could create a lot of unwholesomeness. (for example, for beautifying, humans kill a lot of wild

animals for their skins and furs; sometimes in a very cruel way of stripping off the skins and furs alive to get more money.)

The second requisite is on foods. It does not mention directly on drinks but milk includes in foods and there are some drinks including in medicines. Monks consume foods not with the intentions of sensual pleasure, for good-looking and complexion but for maintaining of the four elements in balance (i.e., health) and follow the holy life (study and practice), or with the purpose of survival of the body and practice, doing things. This is also true for lay people.

Nowadays what happen to humans? There are no restraints on food and drink anymore. They eat and drink a lot more than necessary, and to make foods and drinks more delicious better and better, they put all sorts of artificial stuffs in it. All these create health problems. Some people even go to extremes; he realized that eating those things is harmful to health, but still insists on the idea: let me die for delicious (such as diabetic patients). Making foods is becoming an art. It is not only for delicious but also being attractive to see, so that it can make your saliva drip. Why is so fussy about it? Any kind of foods; good or bad tasty or not tasty, good to look or ugly, etc., all come out from the bottom, becoming the same—smelly and disgusting. Even you don't want to touch it. Even the excreta of animals are valuable. We can use it for fertilizer and energy (e.g., cow excreta used by Indian) and can be sold for money. Who wants to buy human excreta? Our mouths are wasting our money and energy day in day out non-stop. Because of the mouth and stomach, humans create a lot of human problems with it. For this small hole but an ocean-like stomach, humans pollute the food chains by pesticide and all sorts of harmful chemicals. Humans eat everything on Earth: animals swim in water, crawl on the ground, and fly in the air. Some of the epidemics and illness (diseases) come from the mouth craving for animal meat or discontent with foods (e.g., SARS, COVID-19, etc.). For this dangerous mouth, humans kill a lot of animals for foods, sometime in a very cruel way. With this mouth, humans create a lot of problems and suffering with speech (i.e., cheating, harsh-speech, back-biting, frivolous speech, etc.).

But if we can use this mouth properly and wisely, then it becomes a treasure (e.g., noble beings and Dhamma teachers, etc.) There was a very interesting sutta in the *Dīgha Nikāya* called—*Aggañña Sutta* (DN. 27). It mentioned the beginning of humans. When a new Earth was formed (by natural causes) there were no living beings on it, also no sun and moon have appeared yet. When the time came some beings from the higher realms (i.e., material *jhānic* plane) reborn on the Earth spontaneously (*opapātika* beings). These beings had their own body light and could move in the air. They could survive without eating solid foods—instead they lived with joy which was their nutriment. Later they found out that the Earth-crust had a

nice smell taste. It had the color of fine ghee or butter and very sweet like pure wild honey. One of the beings who was a greedy nature and also out of curiosity tasted the savoury earth on its finger. It was quite delicious that craving (taṇhā) arose and continued to eat. The others also saw it and followed suit. So, humans problems started from craving for taste or foods. (Anyone who has interest should read the original sutta. It was not a mythology but more realistic than the Genesis and Evolution Theory. The three worlds—cosmos, living beings and the conditional phenomena—matter and mind world, come to existence according to nature and natural laws or Dhamma-niyama—natural procedure.)

Basically, the four requisites of human are for survival, and more than its necessity and purpose become discontent. The Buddha exhorted us to live a life without concern and a lot of expectation. Because of discontent that we have to work move and tired ourselves. At last, we leave everything behind and ending one's life. We are busy and caught up in unwholesomeness, at last end up with dukkha. Not doing things for progress and development is not contentment. It is called laziness and foolishness. Some people think with the view of contentment there will be no progress (This is the outlook of greedy and unwise people and misinterprets the important quality of contentment.) Laziness and contentment are very different Dhammas—laziness leads to negative outcome and contentment leads to positive outcome. Discontent means dissatisfaction on things which one already has, and wanting more.

We can give a lot of true stories on the topic of discontent from the past and present. I will only mention a few in gist, so that we can understand the dangers of its results. The story of Cunda—the pork butcher.

There was a village not far from Veluvana monastery where the Buddha stayed. (This monastery was in Rājagaha.)

There lived a very cruel pork butcher by the name of Cunda. He did this cruel business for 55 years All these times he has not done a single meritorious deed, even though he lived very near the Buddha and the monks. (even he made lots of money; he must have greedy nature.) On the day before he died, he had been in the situation of great pain and agony behaving like a pig. He was grunting and squealing, kept on moving about on his hands and knees like a pig; it was happening for the seven whole days. After seven days, he died and reborn in avīci-hell. There is a small pig farm just a stone's throw away from where I live. The owner is rich because he has other businesses also. He had stopped this business very short period because his friend told him the outcome of wrong livelihood. After a short period, he continued his business again because of discontent with his income.

The story of a butcher

This happened when the Buddha stayed at Jetavana monastery. In Sāvattthī there was a butcher (not mentioned his name) slathered cattle and sold the meat for 55 years. He craved for meat and took it with rice every day. One day he left some meat for his family and went to a riverside to have his bath. Unluckily a friend of him came and bought the meat by force. When he came back and did not find the meat. He never took his meal without meat-curry. He went to the back yard where his cattle were kept. He cut off the tongue of an ox and roasted it over a fire.

During his meal, he made a bite on the tongue of the ox. As he did so, his own tongue also fell off into his plate. The butcher was in great pain and agony, he went on his knees with blood dripping profusely from the mouth. He died painfully and reborn in Hell.

Lost a wife for chillies

This sad story happened some time ago at May-myo area in Burma. There was a couple doing farm work. The husband was very strong craving for chillies like the butcher in Sāvattthī. He always had his meal with chillies. One day during the meal he asked his wife where the chillies dish was. On that day, she was too busy and forgot to prepare it. He was so angry and could not control his anger, unluckily he grabbed the fire wood near him and bit her on the head. It seemed to be a little over force that she died instantly on the spot.

Robbing a bank with a toy gun

This story came from China TV news. There was a young couple they were urgently in need for some money to do something. The wife asked him to look for the money, but he responded as he could not do other things. Then the wife said: “Can’t you rob the bank?”.

This foolish man took his wife's advice seriously and went to rob a bank with a toy gun. He was arrested and did not know what happen to him again. In China robbing a bank can be a death penalty. Strong craving for something we do not have (i.e., discontent) and trying to get it will sometime lead to crimes (e.g., the monk Devadatta). Also, in China News: a bad guy had an intimacy with a young woman (but not fell in love with each other). Later he approached the parents and the young woman for marrying her. All of them rejected his proposal, so he killed all of them. (Therefore, young women should be very careful to become the prey of evil men.)

The Buddha commented on discontent (non-contentment) as; dissatisfaction with one's own possessions and wanting to get others things belong to others. Someone can think the things belong to others is better than one's own. Sayadaw gave an incident which happened before in Sri Lanka. There was a nunnery with thirty bhikkhunīs. The head nun had the nature of discontent, One time a lay supporter offered thirty cakes to them, all were the same.

She was too choosy (discontent) that asked the second nun on the line to change with her. It was going down the line in this way to the last nun. Only that she had satisfaction. Nowadays humans are worse than this old nun. Their discontent is so extreme that they are exploiting the earth resources for sensual pleasure in all possible ways by neglecting their physical and mental well-being. One of the western philosophies is “Enjoy yourself—Life is short”. I want to add a little more to it. Enjoy yourself—Life is short, and then go to apāya happily. We can justify human great discontent by observing all sorts of pollution internal and external, severe weather, climate changes, global warming, natural disasters, etc. Human discontent is so extreme that one Earth is not enough. They need multiple Earths, so they are starting in competition in space exploration for other planets. Even the Buddha mentioned foolish people as follows; human beings were still in discontent if raining with treasures from the sky by gods. Therefore, contentment is non-greed that suppressing greed which is the cause of suffering.

There was a lot to talk about contentment because it is related to discontent—greed which is about human beings. Therefore, I want to add one more story for contemplation. This was an Arabic tale. There were five Arab merchants travelling in a desert with their camels and goods together. Mostly afternoon they rested at shady places and continued their journey at night. One full-moon night they travelled on the journey and passing near a pit. One of them looked into the pit and saw some glittering objects at the base (because of the full-moon, but the objects were not clear). He told the others to stop and look into it. At last, they made a conclusion that it might be some treasures. So, they decided to let one of them down and checked for it. The greediest one volunteered to go down first. They took off their white long outer clothes, connecting each end to make a rope. As soon as the man's foot touched the base, he immediately saw the object clearly. No, these were not treasure but poisonous cobras and vipers; because the moonlight made the eyes shine. He was so frightened and shocked and shouted at the others above to pull him up quickly because these were snakes. The others did not believe what he said, so they thought he was a greedy person and wanted to trick them. Instead of pulling him up, they sent another man to go down again. For the second man, as soon as his feet touched the ground, he knew what happened down there. So, he shouted back the men up there

as these were only snakes, but they did not believe him and thought both of them were plotting to lie them. In this way all of them lost their lives by going down there because no trust on each other. This was the outcome of over greed and selfishness.

The five Security Council members of the UN were like these five Arab merchants. The five members are also no trust in others by solving world problems. They follow their own desire and opportunity by vetoes on the UN decisions. Instead of solving all the human problems sometime it made them worse (e.g., Syrian Civil War). They oppose and fight each other for their own benefits out of greed, hatred and delusion. The Security Council becomes Insecurity Council and United Nations become Disunited Nations and the problems would never be solved. What's a shame! The fools will never know and appreciate the excellence quality of contentment, but the wise and noble beings understand quite clearly. This is also their precious way of life.

This quality of contentment is a very important one for today world. Both for layman and ordained monk. It has a profound meaning and message within it. We can only discover them by using the Buddha's Teachings with contemplation. It can also be a great wide subject to think about in today human societies. In the English dictionary; contentment is a feeling of quiet happiness and satisfaction.

So, it has a connection with non-greed (alobha). The opposite of discontentment is a connection with greed (lobha). Therefore, contentment leads to true happiness and peace. Discontentment leads to unhappiness and suffering. The quality of contentment is easy to understand and accept by the noble beings, the sages and the wise. But not by common people or mostly not by power and money mongers, business men and greedy people (i.e., some politicians and some economists).

Even we can say today, many world problems have a connection with discontentment or lacking contentment. We are craving for more than we need. Therefore, we are wasting the natural resources, in extravagance, and overindulgence in sensual pleasures. The United States of America is a very good example. They are in great debts to other countries. Not because they are very poor like some African countries, Latin Americans and Asians. But still, many people want to imitate them.

Most worldly people overlook the importance of contentment and discontentment, which affect the families, societies and international levels. Contentment leads to happiness, peace and harmony. Discontentment leads to unhappiness, disharmony and suffering. For examples, in a documentary film, a Chinese bank made a lawsuit to a young man who could not repay his credit card debts and ended up in jail.

This happened for the second time. The first time his father paid for his debts and

this time not taking the responsibility. He blamed the bank for knowing his son situation and still loaned him money. In this case, we can see the connection between discontentment and greed. Worse than this case was a university student in China used his credit cards to borrow money from many different banks.

Now, this is a very big problem in the Banking System of China which came from BBC News. These were very similar to the US Government and its citizens consumed things which more than they needed and created a lot of debts. There was also a very sad story about 15 years or 16 years old youth wanted to possess a smartphone killed his grandma, who had deposited some money in the post office.

Then he took her deposited account book, and took the money out to buy the phone. Some young women, including university students, are selling their bodies to some rich people for money to satisfy their discontentment. There is a lot to talk about family and society problems and suffering which connection with discontentment.

Its connection with international levels is more on a grand scale, which harmfulness brings to the human race. In some countries, the political leaders were still clinging to their powers when the time came for them to let go of it. If they let it go and went back to normal life still could enjoy their high living standards.

But most of them did not and just followed behind their master Discontentment like slaves. And then what happened? Some countries had civil wars and the whole country in chaotic situations, harming, torturing, killing, famine, diseases, war refugees crises around the world, etc.

If these people had contentment all the small problems in their countries would be solved. Big problems always start with small problems. A forest fire starts from a spark, e.g., a burning cigarette butt. Some superpowers came in and interfered between the conflicts that even became more harmful to the people (e.g., the Syrian Civil War).

For clinging to lowly sensual pleasures and created evil deeds are not worthy of it. The kammic debts have to be repaid very seriously. In economic levels discontentment creates mind and body pollution, and natural pollution. What are the mind and body pollution? Human beings become more selfish, greedy, cruel, violent, extravagant, indulgence in sensual pleasures, etc. and the mind become defiled.

To fulfill our greed and make more money with the help of science and technology, we polluted our foods with all sorts of chemicals. What are natural pollution? There are the pollution of earth, water and air—and all sorts of waste materials, such as

industrial waste, consumers' rubbish, etc. With more worldly knowledge and contemplation, the matters and problems from the outcomes of discontentment will never end.

But whatever it is; discontentment never brings true happiness and peace to anyone and society. For a human being to be survived, he only needs the basic four requisites: clothes, foods, dwelling and medicine. So, all the other things are extras for him. Even the Buddha taught the monks to have contentment in these four requisites. To have a simple lifestyle, unburdened to the mind and body, just as a bird whenever it goes, flies its wings as its only burden. So, too is a monk has contentment with a set of robes (three sets of robes), an alms bowl and foods to provide for hunger (one meal a day).

Wherever he goes takes only his barest necessities along (the only barest necessities are—a water strainer, a razor for shaving, and a string girdle to fasten the lower robe at the waist as a belt). A great disciple of the Buddha, Ven. Mahākassapa was an example for contentment; he had mastered left-over scrape for food, smelly urine for medicine, the foot of a tree for dwelling, cast-off rags for robes.

Why the Buddha always praised contentment with little and encouraged monks to have this quality? Because it leads to happiness and peace, easy to develop the practice and realization. People have contentment easier to have patience and endurance in difficult times and situations. Intelligent and wise people will appreciate the quality of contentment. Spiritual people, sages and noble beings know it very well by direct experience on contentment. It develops joy, happiness and peace.

The forest monks live a simple lifestyle in a forest (pristine forests) also experience it very well. (I have mentioned about this in the Introduction of Dto D Forest at the border area between Thailand and Burma). Lay people also if they live a simple life with contentment sure to have joy, happiness and peace compare to discontent people, who have more problems and suffering in life.

Why is that? Strong desire or greed (lobha) is the opposite of contentment. The Buddha mentioned in the four Noble Truths, the main cause of suffering was strong desire (taṇhā). One of the meanings of dukkha is unsatisfactoriness, which equals to discontentment. The Buddha also said that someone had contentment would be happy. It is a noble quality which all noble beings have it. You cannot see it with the eyes. Contentment is a kind of fulfillment, an inner one. It is nothing to do with outside things, such as wealth, money, or sensual objects.

Happiness comes from wealth and sensual pleasures are not true happiness. There are

some very wealthy people without happiness. If someone cannot use the wealth properly will harmful to oneself. Even the Buddha said that for a fool without any wealth was better than he had it. It was like an evil person who lived a shorter life was better than a longer life.

It is also very important not to misinterpret contentment wrongly. It is nothing to do with laziness or non-action. Only the fool, greedy and selfish people interpret in this way. Contentment relates to wholesome dhamma. Discontentment relates to unwholesome dhamma. For searching, knowledge and wisdom should not have contentment.

Have contentment in knowledge and wisdom is not contentment, only laziness and dullness, or a lazy guy and a dullard. So, we should not misinterpret or misunderstand the Buddha Teaching wrongly. Interpret and contemplate according to its context. There was a very good jātaka story for contemplation on discontentment, which leads to negative nature and result. If we observe and study today world situations will see all these points.

The Hansa Jātaka (Jāt. 136, Suvaṇṇahaṃsa Jātaka)

One time the bodhisatta was born as a human being and had a family with two daughters. After he passed away and born as a hansa (or hamsa) bird—a type of water bird which had beautiful color feathers and could fly. It remembered its past life and had compassion on the family of his past. He had golden feathers and every one or two months went there and gave them a golden feather. So, their lives were improved.

After sometimes what happened was his former wife became discontent and very greedy to get more instantly. The last time when the bird came and she arrested him and plucked all the feathers out. It was cruel and without any consent from the bird that all the golden feathers changed into ordinary ones. Therefore, the evil wife kept the naked bird in a trap and waiting for its golden feathers for growing back.

As soon as the feathers were growing back, the golden hansa bird flew away and never came back again. Discontentment or greedy leads to the ending of everything good, and becomes zero. Someone becomes very greedy could do all sorts of evil deeds. His bodily action, speech and mind become unwholesome. These people could do heavy karmas such as patricide, matricide, tried to kill the Buddha, split the monastic saṅgha, etc.

We can see these things happened even in the Buddha's time. For example, the Buddha's cousin Devadatta tried to kill him for power. King Ajātasattu's killing his father King Bimbisāra was also for power. Nowadays, these things are even worse, in family matters, societies, politics, economics, etc. For power and money, people can do all sorts of harmful things. Worshipping money is the most popular religion in the world.

Human beings (mostly politicians, economists, business-people) measure human development with how much money we make, how much sensual pleasures we can enjoy, etc. People and all the media never emphasis or talk about moral issue, virtue and ethic. Therefore, Human thinking and actions are mostly connection with greed, hatred and delusion. The media are also educating people in this direction.

There is a country that measures its progress and development with happiness—this is Bhutan. This is a country in the Himalayas in Southern Asia with beautiful nature of mountains and forest. Their lifestyle is very simple and close to nature and follow the teachings of the Buddha. By seeing the beautiful nature is make your mind becomes joyful and peaceful. Bhutanese are right, the real progress and development is happiness and peace—this comes from a simple lifestyle, close to nature and contentment with life.

Spiritual people, ancient sages and noble beings—mostly forest monks knew the happiness and peace of contentment with direct experiences. With discontentment and greed, human beings create human problems, suffering and natural disasters which all of it we can see in today world. Therefore, the Buddha with great compassion taught us that: Contentment was the highest protection with a blessing.

24. Gratitude

Kataññutā—gratitude is a very important noble quality which most people neglect or overlook it. Even the Buddha emphasized its noble quality in some suttas. The quality of gratitude connects with the quality of integrity. In the English dictionary, integrity has two meanings: the quality of being honest and firm in your moral principles; quality of being one united thing—harmony and peace.

It also connects with the qualities of Respect and Humility and Contentment, etc. These qualities are in this 7th group of Maṅgala Sutta with gratitude. Here and other places the Buddha arranged his Dhamma teaching in a very systematic and profound way. It is no doubt that the Buddha penetrated the whole universe—mind and physical worlds very profoundly.

Even the great genius of science—Albert Einstein profoundly penetrated the physical world. But still, he had family problems (see his biography) because he was a worldling and only seen one side of the coin. The Buddha and noble beings had seen both sides. There will be many future dangers, small and great are waiting for human beings, if we neglect the importance of the mind and its nature.

Because wholesome dhammas are connecting and relating to each other. Unwholesome dhammas are also in this way. We can arrange all the Buddha's teachings into three groups (made by the Buddha himself): Sīla Precepts (morality, virtue, ethics), Samādhi—Concentration (calmness, tranquility, peacefulness) and Paññā (discernment, knowledge, wisdom). It is called three-fold of training or educations.

But in real practice—the Noble Eightfold Path are arranged in Paññā, Sīla and Samādhi—Right view, Right thought; Right action, Right speech, Right livelihood; Right mindfulness, Right effort and Right concentration.

These arrangements were made by the Buddha himself, very systematically, profound, by the real progress and development. First, we need intellectual knowledge or paññā to follow the teachings and practice, as like any worthy knowledge and learning. Therefore, it is more like education than religion.

Buddhists do not accept God idea and its Creation; only interest in human beings, nature and natural laws. It is more like a science. The great differences are scientists only knew the physical world, even they do not know about themselves. Their mind is

closer to them than the external world.

Only we have the intellectual knowledge on the Teachings can have right view, and will follow with right thoughts and thinking. Human thinks accordingly with their believed systems, ideas and doctrines. After thinking, we follow with actions and speech. And then we do all these actions (wholesome or unwholesome) in our daily life with people and in livelihoods. We have to do or create all these actions with mindfulness (attention), effort and focusing on it.

Therefore, start with right view and whatever follows will become right or wholesome. And start with wrong view and wrong thinking whatever follow will be wrong or unwholesome. The results are positive and negative, happiness and suffering, harmony and disharmony, peace and problems, etc.

We have to acknowledge the gratitude and then repay it kindness with action and speech. In a sutta of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha mentioned about two persons hard to find. He said:

“Monks, these two people are hard to find in the world. The one who is first to do a kindness. And the one who is grateful for a kindness done and feels obligated to repay it.”

The first person is someone without any reason; good on others and kind to others. The second person is someone who is acknowledging and grateful for kindness done to him. And then feels the obligation to repay it. At least he responded kindly with thank you. Even we cannot be like the first person and must have the quality of the second one.

If we are naturally not good on others, at least be good on others who have benefited us. Even we should see gratitude as a debt. Some not respond gratitude with kindness and good action, instead insult and injure their benefactors. These are evil, nasty and ignoble people, and it will harm themselves greatly.

Mahākappina Jātaka Story

This was a good lesson for these people. It also taught us what the noble and ignoble beings are. Mahākappina was the name of the monkey, and it was the bodhisatta's past life. A brahman was lost in a deep forest and later fell into a deep valley, injured and could not climb up to the top. Mahākappina—the monkey saw him and had the compassion to save his life. So, he carried the man on his back and brought him to

the top.

The monkey was so tired that he placed his head on the lap of the brahman and took a short rest. During the rest, the man wanted to bring the monkey meat to his wife at home. So, he took a large stone and smacked the monkey head with one blow. The monkey's head was severely injured and blood spurted out and flowed on the whole face and body.

The monkey jumped up instantly and uttered these words surprisingly; "Oh! my God, in this world, still has this kind of man exists." And then he climbed up instantly to a tree nearby and looking at the brahman amazingly. The man then remembered he was still in the deep forest and knew its dangers there with wild beasts, began to cry pitifully. With sympathy he told the brahman; "Now, I can't close to you anymore. But I still keep my promise to let you out from the forest. Follow my blood drops."

The bodhisatta bore his severed pain patiently and jumped from one tree to another and showed the way out. After they came out to the edge of the forest, the monkey watched him from behind until to a short distance and left.

As soon as the brahman was out of the bodhisatta's sight, boils and sores appeared from his whole body. It was very painful and unbearable. He did not dare to go back home and ended up at the city gate and became a street beggar. He lived a very painful and miserable life for a few years. One day the king of the country came out to observe the city, and saw him.

He was looked like a strange beast (may be similar to the elephant man) and the king asked what happened to him. After he told his story to him and died. After died and he was reborn in a hell. This was a miserable outcome of ingratitude and severely injured one's benefactor, who was a noble being. This story was interesting and touching. Ledi Sayadawgyi, in his "Uttamapurisa Dīpanī", a short treatise on perfection, analyzed the ten perfections in this remarkable story.

Another very important gratitude we have to repay is as debt to our parents. In a sutta on Gratitude in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha taught as follow: "These are the levels of a person of no integrity and a person with integrity. A person of no integrity is ungrateful, doesn't acknowledge the help given to him. This ingratitude, this lack of acknowledgment is second nature among rude people. A person of integrity is grateful and acknowledge the help given to him.

This gratitude, this acknowledgment is second nature among fine people. Two people are no easy to repay, your father and mother. Even if you were to carry your mother

on one shoulder and your father on the other shoulder for 100 years. And were to look after them be anointing, massaging, bathing and rubbing their limbs, and they were to defecate and urinate on your shoulders, you would not in that way repay your parents.

Even we were to establish them in absolute sovereignty over this great earth, abounding in the seven treasures still would not in that way repay them (i.e., the status of a universal monarch). Why is that? Father and mother do much for their children. They care for them, nourish them and introduce them to this world.

But anyone who rouses his unbelieving parents to settle and establish them in conviction (*saddhā*); rouses his un-virtuous parents to settle and establish them in virtue; rouses his stingy parents to settle and establish in generosity and rouses his foolish parents to settle and establish them in discernment (*paññā*); to this extent, one repays one's parents."

Above, what the Buddha emphasized the important quality of gratitude was not a small matter. Because he was the greatest of all beings in wisdom and mind power, penetrated everything profoundly and clearly. Now, let us contemplate ancient sages and today people how they see the matter of gratitude. First, study, observe and contemplate ancient culture and sages on gratitude.

Here I can do it with the eastern culture and sages which more or less I know. In all the Buddhist countries with the Buddhist culture and teachings will follow what the Buddha taught. Nowadays the view and practice with gratitude will be Changed a lot with the influence of western culture and thinking. This also strongly influences on the modern Chinese, old or young.

Chinese people were from ancient time had teachings and education in moral and ethical standards, disciplines, duties and obligations from the family level, society level and government level. It seemed to be these wholesome views and education systems were already existing even before Confucius's time. At a family level, it includes the relationship between parent and children concern with disciplines, rules, duties, obligations, etc.

One of the most important matters is children should have gratitude, respect, proper duties and obligations to the parents. This Shao Tao (it seems to translate into English as filial piety) is the foundation in family education. These moral or ethical codes are very important for human development. Without mental or mind development, material development is dangerous and harmful as seen in today world.

Why is that? If someone does not have any gratitude, respect, duty and obligation to his/her parents will never good to other people. These moral education and codes of conducts are not only concern with family life; it also related to society and country levels. Family life is like the source of a tree, its root. A healthy and strong root will grow a strong trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits.

Therefore, in the ancient time wise emperors, teachers and sages trained and educated crowned princes, government officials and students with these moral and ethical educations and codes of conduct. Some Chinese dynasties were last longer than others because of moral or ethical standards. These were not surprising if someone understands the laws of nature. From wholesome dhamma,, people will get wholesome results.

Nowadays, some Chinese politicians and Chinese people influence by outside or foreign views, cultures and educations and they look down on their culture, moral and ethical values and standards as superstitions and nonsense. These misunderstandings and misinterpretations come from ignorance and delusion. They are deluded and quite ignorant about these moral and ethical standards, values and codes which are related to the natural laws and its ways.

In Chinese, it can be said as tien tao and tien fa or roughly in Chinese the heavenly way and heavenly dhamma—the codes of conducts. These wholesome dhammas will lead beings to good destinations (sugati), such as humans and heavenly beings. Going against them and following the opposite ways will be sure to dugati—painful destinations such as hell beings, animals and ghosts. These are universal and by the law of cause and effect, law of dependent co-arising and law of conditional relation. Whatever your faiths, views, nationality and culture backgrounds, it is always true. These are not inventions by ancient sages and noble beings like the Buddha. They have only discovered the natural laws which govern nature and beings and not by gods or God.

So, some people crazy for power and money is so strong that they do not have any moral standards, values and behaviors. These people take unwholesome things and matters as wholesome, and wholesome as rubbish and non-sense. They misconceive poison as medicine; medicine as poison. The sun will never rise from the west and only from the east. Especially influential people (leaders, politicians, economists, businessmen, etc.) have to be very careful with their outlooks and conducts.

If they are thinking foolishly and conducting stupidly, the harm they cause themselves and others are very serious. We can see all the harms caused by foolishness and stupidity in world history. Great dynasties, kingdoms and great

cultures were wiped out on the earth. To become a decent human being need moral educations and conducts. We are born into the human realm must think and behave like a man, and not like animals, ghosts and hell beings. If we have to change, have to change our mind and conduct.

We cannot change the natural law and it will never be. If we were born and will die for sure, and not by God's wishes, but by the natural laws. A very well known English historian Arnold Toynbee who had studied many world languages praised Chinese culture very highly and its philosophical and wisdom language. People who study Chinese letters will understand what he had said. Some people are asking questions like; "Is man has any future?" Some scholars refer to Chinese civilization and culture as a good example.

From the Buddha's teachings, this point is also true. The ups and downs of human civilization greatly depend on human moral principles. These are foundations not only as a human but also for survival and progress. All these points were mentioned in two of the long discourses in the Dīgha Nikāya; Cakkavatti Sutta and Aggañña Sutta.

It seemed to be the Chinese knew these things even before the Buddha. This might be one of the main reasons when Buddhism came to China and Chinese people were easily accepted as part of their lives and developed it. Now, these three teachings: Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism are inseparable, and not like the other faiths and religions.

Talk about gratitude, Ven. Sāriputta was also a good example of integrity. He was grateful and acknowledged the help given to him by someone. It was second nature to him, and among the fine people, the Buddha also supported it. Therefore, I have said many times before Ven. Sāriputta was the loveliest man on the earth. He had many fine qualities we need to learn from him. Sāriputta entered the stream (became a sotāpanna) was not with the direct teachings of the Buddha. He heard a short verse from Ven. Assaji (Aśvajit) which run thus:

“Ye dhammā hetuppa bhava, tesaṃ tathāgato āha, tesañca yo nirodho, evaṃ vādī mahā samaṇo.” “The Tathāgata (i.e., Buddha) has declared the cause and also the cessation of all phenomena which arise from the cause. This is the teaching held by the great monk.” Therefore, Ven. Sāriputta always paid respect in the direction where Ven. Assaji was and went to sleep with his head lying in the same direction. This was out of gratitude and respect for his teacher. The Buddha also encouraged the monks to follow his example.

Another story about him was related to Ven. Rādhā. Rādhā was a poor old brahman who stayed in the monastery and helping the saṅgha with small matters. So, the saṅgha provided him with foods, clothing and dwelling. He wanted to become a monk and asked permission from them. Because of his old age, no one wanted to help him. But the Buddha, with his super-normal power, knew that he was due for arahantship. So, he called all the monks and asked them as was there anyone received Rādhā's offering before.

Ven. Sāriputta told the Buddha that Rādhā had offered him a spoonful of rice before. Therefore, he asked Ven. Sāriputta received him as his disciple and trained him. Ven. Sāriputta ordained him and trained him. Old monk Rādhā was easy to admonish and followed his instructions strictly that within a few days became an arahant. Here was Ven. Sāriputta even remembered very clear Rādhā as a layman offered him a spoonful of rice very long time ago.

This wholesome quality compared to the character of Devadatta, was quite far apart. In the above story Mahākappina, the brahman who smacked the monkey's head was Devadatta's past life. Ven Rādhā was not an ordinary monk. He was easy to admonish and train also had the desire to know and learn Dhamma. Because of him, there were some Dhamma recorded in the Saṃyutta Nikāya as Rādhā Saṃyutta.

He put a lot of questions to the Buddha on Dhamma (over 20 of them) which the Buddha answered and inspired others. Therefore, he was foremost in this. He also had a darker side about him before ordained. He was a family man before and had some children of his own. But after getting old nobody wanted to look after and care for him. Therefore, I ended up living at the monastery.

Nowadays, most societies are a similar situation; more and more people neglect their parents. Some end up on the street life and others in nursing homes. This kind of ingratitude and disrespect creates without love, compassion and unconcern for others. Even we cannot have gratitude, respect, love, compassion and concern for our parents and it is impossible for thinking to others.

Survival for the fittest is animal philosophy and not for human. Even by reading or hearing about noble beings such as ancient sages, great men, bodhisatta, chief and great disciples of the Buddha and lay people are inspiring and joy arises. If we put them into practice, the results will be greater.

Another important matter to contemplate on gratitude and respect is the natural world surrounds the mother Earth or us. One of the most important things always needs to remind us is we are part of nature. We can never be separated from it if we

are selfishly exploiting or misusing it and just for suicide. Therefore, all our thinking and behaviors affect our great mother Earth, just as to our mothers.

The Buddha and ancient sages already knew this a long time ago. Today sciences also confirm it with study, observation, experiment and research. (The same as laws of kamma and rebirth. These discoveries by science solve the problem of God). Our Earth is quite a beautiful planet in our solar system. All these we can see in many color photos around the world if any place was protected.

Even it is quite beautiful from the outer space. Any place without destroyed or polluted by human—forest, mountain, stream, river, waterfall, flowers, trees, etc. have amazing beauty. These things can be felt by people who love and close to nature. The four great element water, earth, fire and air are nourishing our physical bodies day in day out, and all the year round. Our health and survival depend on them.

Does anyone say thank you and I love you to our benefactors? For example, water is the source of life. It has many interesting qualities with it. We are never thinking and concerning them. Without all these natural resources, our human civilization cannot survive and develop or progress. Nowadays if we look at nature, we do a lot of harm to them out of greed and delusion. All the pollution we created were poisoning the earth. Therefore, there are many natural disasters that appear by destroying the harmony of nature.

Even human beings are in disharmony; there will be violence and suffering arise in societies. In nature, everything is interconnecting and relating, whether these are animate or inanimate things. Therefore, with gratitude and respect, we should protect the Earth, treat it properly and wisely. With gratitude and respect come to love, compassion, concern, harmony, happiness and peace.

So, let us develop the noble quality of gratitude for the highest protection with a blessing to oneself and others. (2017 was the hottest year in records. And also, many disasters appeared such as heavy rains, hurricanes, forest fire, very high temperature (50°C), earthquakes, etc.

And then in the United States of America, there were many shootings with guns and killed a lot of innocent people, As an, e.g. in Arizona State, a man from the window of a hotel room was shooting people with the automatic rifle. These people were gathering at the open air concert. Most of these things were happening on the continent of America. Now, the most important and urgent problem to solve is temperature rising. Human mind and behaviors (i.e., unwholesome mental states and actions) are the main causes of all these unfortunate results).

25. Hearing the Dhamma on Timely Occasions

Some Buddhists may be not taken this matter seriously and very important. There are many reasons for listening to Dhamma as very important. Nowadays, we can include also study and reading the Buddha's Teachings from Pāli texts translations or written by scholars (most importantly by Buddhist scholars, such as monks).

One of the factors for realization is listening Dhamma talks. The Buddha also said to the monks, after he passed away, the Buddha Dhamma was their teacher. Only by knowing the teachings we can have right views, what are wholesome and not wholesome, what is right or wrong, what is proper or not proper and then we can walk on the right path.

In the Buddha's time even, some monks and lay people were having the realizations while listening to the Dhamma of the Buddha or one of his disciples. Among the Theravadin Buddhist countries, Burmese Buddhists are very fortunate in this matter. Because Burmese monks had the strong tradition of study and practice of the Pāli texts. It produced many fine scholar monks and meditation teachers. From the middle of the 20th century up to this day, some monks could recite the whole Tipiṭaka by heart.

Burmese monks usually give their talks based on the suttas. So, by listening these talks were like it came from the Buddha directly. Even today, there are more lay people studying the suttas and Abhidhamma directly with teachers.

What time should people listen to Dhamma? It had been said differently in the texts. In the Mahāgovinda Sutta (DN 19), it was mentioned every five days, and in one sutta it also said that if someone had time and teacher for giving a talk should listen to it. The best time may be someone has stress, unhappiness, sorrow, lamentation pain, grief and despair, a very good example—the story of Therī Patācārā (a Buddhist nun).

Before ordained, she had lost her whole family, husband, two sons, parents and three brothers. With over sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, she became nearly mad. And then she encountered the Buddha and by listening to his powerful Dhamma, she overcame her sorrow and entered the stream. (Thig. 112 16; ThigA. 108ff. Ap. ii. 557f; AA. ii. 194ff; DhA. ii. 260ff; iii. 434f ; J. vi. 481.)

Another interesting story was about the heavenly being (devata) Subrahmā (S. I. 53; SA. i. 88f). One time he was enjoying the heavenly pleasures with his 1,000 celestial nymphs outdoor under a flowering tree. Human beings enjoy the lowly and ignoble pleasures by making money to destroy the earth, without unaware of the outcome of it. So, heavenly beings are more easily under the power of delusion.

The five hundred nymphs on the tree plucked the flowers and threw it down for the other 500 underneath the tree. They made the wreaths of flower for Subrahmā. After sometimes the 500 nymphs on the tree died suddenly and disappeared on the spot. They took rebirths in hell. Without the flowers coming down and singing, the others looked up the tree and found out the situation.

Not seeing anyone of them, Subrahmā devata with his divine eyes searched for them and found them in the hell. The working of the law of kamma is inconceivable. Everyone (all living beings) has good and bad kammas carrying with them (kammic energy) in the round of existence. All these are waiting for chances to give the results.

Now, the time was ripe for these beings. So, Subrahmā checked his future with his super-normal power, and also found out that after seven days they would die and fall into the hell. Hence, in utter fear, he came to the Buddha for seeking consolation. The Buddha gave them talk and at the end, all of them entered the stream. The door to hell waiting for them was closed forever. So, Buddhists should listen to Dhamma talks (including reading and studying) at any time if they have chances and times.

This will increase our knowledge and become intelligent and wise people. Spiritual people knew this point very well. For example, the Chinese sages invented a system of training their students, which was called reading texts for 100 times or 1,000 times. Some modern teachers experimented with these systems and found out that children had bad habits and characters changed to good persons. They also had a strong power of attention and intelligence.

Time limit is not the main point here in hearing the Dhamma. The time someone needs it urgently is more important, as shown above with the nun Patācārā and Subrahmā devata. But with more listening is better, because it will decrease our mental pollution. By watching some of the media such as movies, TV programs, video games, etc. are quite harmful to people. If they include a lot of violence, sex, etc. which are pollutants for our minds. It is like a bulb light in a kitchen at the cooking place, everyday contacts with the dirty air with oil and smoke. After sometimes it becomes dirtier, clouded and not bright anymore. Why is that? Because we use our six senses in an unwholesome way. It also likes eating unhealthy foods for every day; such as junk foods, foods connecting with pesticides, foods with chemicals

inside, etc. Then our health degenerate and end up with sickness, pains and deaths.

Our mind is like clear water or bright mirror. With it, we can see things clearly and penetrate them. With the dirty one, we cannot do it. There are some higher beings—the rūpa-deva gods (or rūpabhava—beings with the material jhānic power) seemed to used only three senses; eye, ear and mind doors. These are very useful and important for them.

They can meet the Buddha and arahants to listen to their talk and easily get attainments. The other sensitivities of smell, taste and touch, which they do not need them. But human beings are not like this. They prefer to see and listen to a lot of media with pollutants such as sex, violence, useless chattering, etc. Even some children are not escaping from these pollutants. Because some comic books, cartoons, video games, books included these things in it. Media have the great power of educations.

Regarding media education, there was a tragic story connected with a woman named Miss Song. It is worth to mention here. She was from the Liao Ning Province of the N. E. China.

When she was young as a teenage girl liked to watch TV, videos, and movies and brainwashed by the polluted media. And then she started to beautify herself and had a lot of affairs with men. According to her confession, she had over 40 lovers in her life. At the age of 50, she found out that she had the cancer of the uterus. It was in a serious and severe situation, blood and pus came out often.

The doctor told her that she could survive only three months. Luckily at that period, she encountered with good-hearted people who studied and practiced Confucianism and Buddhism. Within the short period of her life, she gave a lot of public talks and educated people not to get lost in media.

At last with the Buddhist practice, she passed away peacefully. Here we can see the results of unwholesome and wholesome educations very clear. Therefore, we should not use it for foolishly and stupidly. And should not take media education as lightly. Today a lot of social problems have a lot of connection with them.

The benefits of listening Dhamma are:

- (1) Hearing things never heard before
- (2) Having a clear knowledge
- (3) Overcoming doubts
- (4) Having right views
- (5) One's mind grows serene.

These are the five rewards in listening to the Dhamma.

(1) One hears what one has not heard before

Most people knowledge is very limited. But Buddhas were an exception. In a sutta, the Buddha said that his knowledge was like many leaves in a forest, but he taught only like a handful of leaves on his hand. Even these handful of teachings we know very little, not completely and only superficially. Many of them were we never heard before. If make out the lists there are many.

The most important one was the Four Noble Truths with its details in many suttas. Some of the worldly knowledge even we know very little about it, e.g. rebirth, other faiths take it as reincarnation. Some even not accept this view. The Buddha described it as the rounds of existence, and with it 31 realms of existence.

(2) One clarifies what one has heard before

These are also can give many examples of them. Most people think God creates us and believe in the Creation. The Buddha taught the rounds of the existence of all living beings with the law of Dependent Co-arising (Paṭiccasamuppāda). Most people believe there is a permanent self, a soul, or God exists.

They also heard from many faiths teach about them. When they read Buddhism or listen to Dhamma on the doctrine of not-self (anatta) which they never heard before, even not in this life, but for many lives of existence. Because only the Buddha and Pacceka-buddhas could discover it and only the Buddha could teach them. Therefore, it is not surprising that nobody can teach about it.

(3) One gets rid of doubt

Overcoming of doubt is very important for whatever we are studying or doing. Because this is one of the hindrances. The meaning of doubt is: have a feeling of uncertainty, isn't true or possible? Probably not true or possible, might not be true or might not be existed. So, it has the power of obstruction to our progress in doing something and knowledge.

If someone doubts wrong views and practices is better than without it. But if

someone doubts right views and practices will incline towards wrong views and practices; then it is dangerous. In Buddhist spiritual practice overcoming doubt is very important. This is one of the foundations of knowledge in insight practice (vipassanā).

The other is the foundation knowledge of the mind and material phenomena or right view. With the analytical knowledge of mind and body, the view of a being, a person, a soul or self is disappeared. Then, it reduces the affection and hate (like or dislike) on someone. Overcoming doubt is the discernment of the conditions of mind and body. In the world, the different faiths or religions arise is not knowing the causes of phenomena, e.g., the doctrine of the creator and the creation.

The causes of phenomena are so deep and profound that people are following the ways of easy thinking. The Buddha did not accept the first cause or root cause. The easiest way of thinking is the doctrine of causes—ahetuka-vada. Both of them are extreme views. Here I want to present a story of a person who had got rid of doubt. This man was born into a Muslim family. At a young age, his father forced him to study and learn the Koran text with a teacher. He had the nature of curiosity, inquiry mind and intelligent. He never accepted anything without clear understanding and direct experience.

Later he fell in love with a Christian and studied the Old and New Bibles. Later he became a teacher in Philosophy Department and studied all the eastern and western philosophy and doctrines. After sometimes, he had the duty to write a book on Buddhist Ethics to teach the philosophy students. He did not have good knowledge of Buddhism, except mentioned in the Philosophy books. So, he made thorough research and study on Buddhism for the Buddhist Ethics textbook.

Even later he wrote a book on Religions, included 11 faiths. From his knowledge about religions, he preferred Buddhism to others. The reason behind it was more logical and profound than others. The most important point was Buddhism cleared away of his doubt on the Creator and the Creation as it was not the truth. But still at that time not become a Buddhist yet. He still doubted the doctrine on rebirth.

The reason was he could not prove it or had direct experience. Luckily, later, he could prove it as a truth. And then became a Buddhist at the age of 50. Later he went to 10 days vipassanā retreat and had a direct understanding of the four Noble Truths and became a Buddhist monk. This was the ending of all of his search for the truth. Doubt on his father's faith led to the search for the truth, and with the Buddha's teaching led to the ending of all doubts.

(4) One's views are made straight

If one has wrong views and by listening Dhamma, clearing doubt and wrong views. So, one's views are made straight or right. There are eight causes for wrong views to arise. The two main causes are:

[1] Listening wrong teachings

[2] Unwise attention (ayonisomanasikāra).

The opposites are also true if someone who has to listen the right teachings will have right views and wise or right or proper attention. With wise attention and wrong views are overcome. There was an interesting discourse in the Aṅguttara Nikāya. It was Ārāmaḍa Sutta [AN.2.36 (PTS) or AN.2.38 (CSCD)] and the name of a brahman. He asked Ven. Mahā-kaccāna (or Mahā-kaccāyana) about the reasons for disputes and arguments. He asked in general and Ven. Mahā-kaccāna also answered in general. Only the Buddha and arahants overcome them.

The causes are still existing that people have disputes and arguments. With different views that people are disputing and arguing. Therefore, we must find out the causes for them to arise. The Buddha's Teachings were searching for the main causes. There are two causes: original and nearest causes. The four Noble Truths are also in this way. These are internal and external causes, without finding out the internal causes we cannot solve the disputes.

There are two groups of disputed people; the householders and religious group. Their fundamental internal causes are different. In one of Mahā-kaccāna's discourses, the internal cause for householders for dispute is kāmāragābhīnivesa kilesa—the defilement of sensual lust. These are the desirous objects of the five sense objects—form, sound, smell, taste and touch.

Sensuality is the main cause and there are also other causes. Sensual lust sinks someone. People are controlled and governed by lust and sensuality that in disputes and arguments. Out of craving or desire that many disputes are arising. If we study the present situations around the world, this is very clear.

Religious people are disputing and arguing for different views, doctrines, ideas and outlooks. Overcome or transcend sensual lust and views are the Buddha and arahants only.

Buddhists who listen to Dhamma talks with mindfulness or Pāli Chanting know this

experience directly. Wholesome dhamma has the wholesome result, and unwholesome dhamma has an unwholesome result. Therefore, we should not overlook the effect of sound on one's mind. Even nature is sensitive about it.

So, we have to be very careful about the media. Seeing and watching all this rubbish will pollute our mind. Now, scientists with many types of research and experiments also have found its effects on the mind and the physical world.

Recently, a very funny thing had happened. In America, at a music concert, surely it was nothing to do with classical music. This was violent music with the youths and they were singing and shouting violently. Suddenly a 16-year-old girl fell and they sent her to a hospital and saved her life. Her lung could not work properly because of the over shouting. Luckily, the doctors saved her life back.

The Mahayana Buddhists even use sound and spiritual music to calm their mind. In the Pāli Suttas there were many stories and incidents of monks and lay people by listening to the Dhamma gave by the Buddha and they had realizations. Why could these people achieve the results? We know that Buddhist training is *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. (precepts, concentration and discernment or wisdom).

During the talks, their precepts were pure. Concentrating on the Dhamma and their mind became calm and peaceful. Their mind was not concentrating on the sensual objects like today, man. With the calm and peaceful mind and contemplation led to a realization. The nun Patacārā was overcome by sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, which made her nearly mad. After hearing the Buddha's teaching, her mind became calm and serene. And then continued to give her special teaching that she was established in the fruit of stream-entry.

Ālavaka was the most violent and fearsome ogre (*yakkha*). He was so angry with the Buddha that he even threatened to split the Buddha's heart and grabbed him by the feet and hurled him across the Ganges River. After listening to the Dhamma, even this very violent and fearsome being, his mind became calm and serene and also established in the fruit of stream-entry.

So, hearing and listening Dhamma is a very important matter for Buddhists. It is as an important practice in cultivation of the mind, by listening very often with contemplation. This is not only accumulated Dhamma knowledge with contemplation but also increase our intelligence and discernment. With a lot of Dhamma knowledge and practice, we can solve many problems in daily life when it needs.

In a sutta in the Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN 5.194 Kāraṇapālisuttaṃ), two brahmins Kāraṇapāli and Piṅgiyāni were talking about the Dhamma of the Buddha. Piṅgiyāni brahman explained to the other brahmin on the qualities of the Buddha Dhamma with five similes. Brahmin Piṅgiyāni was a non-returner (anāgāmin) and visiting the Buddha every day to offer incense and garlands.

[1] Someone after listening to the Dhamma of the samaṇa Gautama (i.e., Buddha) and he could not listen to the other dhammas anymore (i.e., the teachings of other teachers). As an example, someone after eating the best delicious food in full stomach and he could no longer desire tastes of an inferior kind.

[2] Whichever part of the Dhamma one had listened, it would give the satisfaction and placidity of mind. (i.e., it was good in the beginning, in the middle and the end). As an example, someone in hunger and received a honey ball whichever part he had bitten and it gave the delicious flavor.

[3] Whichever part of the Dhamma one had listened, one would derive elation and joy. It was like someone who came upon sandalwood and any part of it would give the sweet smell.

[4] Buddha Gautama was like a medical doctor and his Dhamma could cure the mental diseases (kilesa roga—defilement of the mind). It was like a skillful physician might instantly cure someone who was afflicted and gravely ill. Mahayana medicine Buddha could come from this idea.

[5] Someone was traveling under a very hot sun, with the burning heat, tiredness and hunger. After he encountered a lotus pond, it released him from burning heat, tiredness and hunger.

In the same way by hearing the Buddha Dhamma, it freed someone from the heat of defilement (from the Kāraṇapāli Sutta). So, the power of Dhamma is unlimited and the best medicine for all ills of the world. Whether it is about the body or the mind, in family problems or social problems, political or economic problems, most Buddhists maybe never thought that they are the most fortunate and luckiest beings in the world, because of the past great merits they encounter the Buddha Dhamma in this life.

The Buddha had mentioned very clear that to get a human birth, encounter the Dhamma, to have an interest, to understand and practice accordingly was the most difficult matter in the world. But most of us are taking it as easy and never thinking it as a priceless treasure. We are foolishly and stupidly wasting our chances, time and

energy in trivial matters and things. There was an interesting sutta about the four best things in the world.

The devas or gods were looking for the answer to the highest blessing for 12 years. There was also a monk who had super-normal power wanted to know the ending of the four great elements. So, he went to heaven to look for the answer. From the lower realms of deity to higher realms of the Brahma god and no-one could answer him. Therefore, he had to come down again and ask the Buddha for the answer.

All these profound questions were except the Buddha no one could answer them. Here also the Four Great Kings of the heaven (Cātummahārājika deva) asked Sakka, the King of the 33 Gods on these four best things. Sakka could not give them the answers, so they all came to the Buddha for the answers.

All these four things are connecting with Dhamma.

(1) What is the best gift in the world?

If we are talking about gifts, there are many kinds and for many reasons. As Buddhists, we give or offer four requisites to the monks. Dāna is giving and has two meanings; the gifts and the mental state of giving volition, or things and action. There is a very special kind of gifts which most people overlook or neglect. This is paññā dāna—the gift of knowledge. Gift of things and the gift of knowledge (especially here is the Buddha Dhamma) which one is the best? Dhamma gift is the best one.

The Buddha's answer to the devas was: "Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti—The gift of Dhamma is greater than all other gifts." The devas are satisfied with the answer. The commentary explained it as followed. Why the Buddhists make dāna as the best gift? There are many reasons for this wholesome action. For some, this is the second nature for them and carried with them from their past lives.

For most Buddhists, they develop this wholesome dhamma from the teaching of the law of kamma. The basic reason for Dhamma gift is greater than others is it can lead to the realization of Nibbāna. One of the factors for realization of Nibbāna is listening Dhamma talks. (exception of the Buddha and Pacceka-buddhas).

Therefore, the gift of Dhamma is the best gift. In this discourse, we are talking about from the point of gift receiver and not the giver. The giver also has its benefits. Material gifts are for this life only and most of them are short life span, e.g., giving foods. Gift of Dhamma leads to the ending of dukkha. Therefore, the gift of

Dhamma is incomparable from other gifts.

Salvatore Cioffi (1897-1966)—U Lokanatha:

A long time ago in the first half of 20th century, an Italian American chemist received a gift of Dhamma from a friend for Christmas. This book was the English translation of “Dhammapada”. After reading it and he became a Buddhist. Giving up his job and wealth, he went to Burma and ordained there. His ordained name was Ven. Lokanatha or well known in Burma as Italian monk U Lokanatha.

After some years in monkhood, he walked on foot along the silk road from Asia to pass the middle east and to the USA. He determined to follow the Bodhisatta Path (to become a future Buddha). One time he went to pay homage to the famous Ven. Webu Sayadaw and asked him directly; “Ven. Sayadaw, are you an arahant?” Instead of answering his question directly, Sayadaw’s respond was; “I have no courage to become a bodhisatta.” Sayadaw U Lokanatha passed away in Burma in 1966 (He was in Burma for 40 years).

(2) What is the best enjoyment or taste?

There are nine kinds of enjoyment. These are the enjoyments of the common people.

- [1] Enjoyment comes from funny things, or people are amusing and make you smile or laugh.
- [2] Enjoyment comes from affection
- [3] Enjoyment comes from sympathy (karuṇārasa)
- [4] Enjoyment comes from violence; people like to watch violent movies, and people commit terrors can come from this taste, such as terrorism.
- [5] Enjoyment comes from courageous acts
- [6] Enjoyment comes from loathsomeness
- [7] Enjoyment comes from amazement
- [8] Enjoyment comes from fright (ghost story)
- [9] All other feelings

According to the Buddha; “The taste of Dhamma is greater than all other tastes—Sabbam̐rasam̐ dhammaraso jīnāti” (Dhp. 354). Why is that? There are no real peace and happiness behind all the other enjoyments. In the end, these are not good. It cannot last long and at last, make people become in confusion.

(3) What is the best delight of the mind?

There are many things which people are looking for delight. Some are with family members, with wealth, with sense objects, etc. People are always looking for pleasure and no contentment. This is human nature. After they get what they want and become happy and joy with it for some periods. Later they become bored with them. So, they are changing object to object, matter to matter and never have satisfaction with it. From discontentment and dissatisfaction come human problems and suffering.

Heavenly beings also have this kind of situation. The Buddha's answer was; "Sabbaratiṃ dhammarati jināti"—The delight of Dhamma is better than all other delights" (Dhp. 354). Worldly pleasures are not peaceful and calm, even lead to problems and suffering. Dhamma delight or enjoyment is peaceful and calm and true happiness. Therefore, yogis and noble beings who have jhānas and fruits use to stay in these peaceful states.

Even the pleasure comes from study and contemplate, the Buddha Dhamma leads to joy and happiness, which excel the sensual pleasure.

(4) What is the best destruction?

The destruction of craving/greed (taṇhā) or dukkha is the best. Therefore, the Buddha's answer was; "Taṇhakkhayo sabbadukkhaṃ jināti—The destruction of craving or all dukkha is the best." (Dhp. 354). The destruction of craving or all dukkha is the highest stage of realization, which is arahatta magga and phala—the path and fruit of arahantship.

Therefore, the arahatta magga and phala is the destruction of craving/taṇhā—taṇhākkhaya with the destruction of craving and free from all kind of dukkha. Because craving is the source of all dukkha, we cannot destroy dukkha directly.

So, craving is the cause and dukkha is the result. With practice, we can cut off the connection between them. With the destruction of taṇhā and dukkha is ended. But human beings are afraid of the destruction of taṇhā. So, they are searching and fighting for wealth, power and pleasure with each other. With human conflicts, all social problems and sufferings arise. Nowadays, these problems and sufferings are worse than before. With the power of science and technology, the destruction is

becoming greater.

Now we are at a critical point. The Buddha taught and urged us for the destruction of craving. Human beings, instead of listening to the Buddha, and become the followers of Mara—The Evil One/Tanhā and develop and increase its qualities. All these four questions were searching and discussing the answers for 12 years. At last, they found the answers from the Blessed One.

The power of Dhamma was so great that even the Buddha took the Dhamma as his teacher. Without a teacher is dangerous and many problems and sufferings are waiting for each one of us from now on to the future. Therefore, hearing the Dhamma on timely occasions is the highest protection with a blessing. Listening very quite often is the best way. We should use our leisure time on it.

If we are listening to Tāṇhā very often it will become our teacher; it will sink us to the bottom of the ocean floor and we can never come up to the surface again. This is the power of taṇhā. If we take the Dhamma as our teacher, we can rise higher and higher, at last, will transcend the world and free forever. Listening Dhamma is truly the highest protection and blessing.

Here I want to make some suggestions for Buddhists. It is also very important to other faiths by their teachings. Because terrorists and terrorism arise has some connections with the misunderstanding and misinterpretation problems. Some years ago, the Ven. Nyanaponika Thera mentioned the following point in one of his essays. He said that in the past some Sri Lanka families were teaching their children after they came back from works and schools in the evening before the meal.

Another important thing was some mothers or fathers near bedtime telling their young children with Buddhist stories, such as jātaḱa stories about the bodhisatta—The Great Being. There are nearly 550 stories which described the Buddha's past lives developed the ten perfections as a bodhisatta. Each perfection has three levels; basic, middle and higher or highest levels. At least every human being should have the basic level of perfection, and can be called as a true human.

Some might think cultivated the pāramīs was for oneself. It is for both, to oneself and others. These are giving services and making sacrifices for all living beings. Selfishness and egocentricity bring problems and sufferings to oneself and others. Nearly all the Buddha's teachings were about human beings and societies. Therefore, teaching the children with Buddhist stories is an important education for them. So, listening Dhamma is not only for grown-up Buddhists but to all groups.

26. Patience

Patience is khanti in Pāli. In English, if you have patience, you can stay calm and not get annoyed. But this English meaning is not completed. The Buddha's teaching on patience was not only with unpleasant things and matters but also with pleasant things and matters. So, it has a connection with equanimity (upekkhā). The Buddha praised this quality highly. With the following of all the explanations and we know why it is so important?

There are ten perfections (pāramīs) for the candidate of a Buddha to be (i.e., bodhisatta). One of them is patience (khanti). Each of the perfections has three levels; these are basic, middle and highest levels. The hermit Sumedha (the past life of Buddha Gautama) went to a quiet place and contemplated on the ten perfections one by one after he received the prediction from the Buddha Dīpankara.

Khanti pāramī was the 6th one. It was like the earth whatever good or bad things discarded on it and it did not have any reaction of love and hate. So, it is the mental factor of non-hatred (adosa). Sīla, samādhi and paññā can be possible only with patience. All the wholesome dhammas can progress with patience. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, there was a sutta mentioned some of its power. The power of wise, sages and noble beings was patience.

Ledi Sayadaw mentioned about Khanti Pāramī in the following way, in his “Uttamapurisa Dīpanī”. Patience has two kinds; patience with living beings; and patience with unpleasant phenomena, such as heat and cold, etc. So, the Buddha taught patience with many things. The main point is in the world if we encounter internal and external phenomena not let these things soil our mind, without complaining and facial expression. And we are just doing our tasks of merit and welfare without affecting them, with a clear and determined mind.

Ledi Sayadaw continued to explain the perfection of equanimity (upekkhā pāramī). Upekkhā means; not taking pleasure and affection to someone who praises, respect and offers things to oneself. Or not displeasure and hate to someone who blames, doing wrong, harm and defame to oneself. Does not has these double minds on these two persons mean upekkhā. With the stability of khanti and upekkhā pāramīs, the other pāramīs can progress smoothly. It was like children born from the mother's womb looked after or protected by the parents would grow up.

If not looked after or protected by them and would die there. Therefore, patience is

like the mother and upekkhā is like the father. Some Buddhists formulated six perfections, which not included upekkhā. Maybe they were confused with the equanimity of the four Divine Abidings (Brahmavihāra Dhamma). With the two qualities of patience and equanimity will develop wholesome actions smoothly.

The wholesome actions which looked after and protected by the perfection of renunciation (nekkhamma pāramī) can become perfected actions or perfected wholesome actions. Without the protection of nekkhamma pāramī and taking pleasure in the wholesome results and it will not become the perfected merit. These kinds of merit are bound with becoming. It was like the children who were looking after by parents but without protecting by doctor and medicines.

They were getting sick with foods and drinks. Trees can be grown up and developed by soil and water. So, patience is like the soil and equanimity is water. The equanimity comes from the Brahmavihāra Dhammas is a little different from the perfection of equanimity. Brahmavihāra upekkhā not concern for the welfare of beings. Upekkhā pāramī concerns for the welfare of all without any distinction good or bad to oneself.

Ledi Sayadaw continued the ten perfections with the example of Mahākappina Jātaka story. Explained one by one of them in this story. For patience and equanimity as follow: 'The monkey (i.e., bodhisatta) head was smacked by the evil brahman with a big stone. Blood streamed out with the severe pain. But the monkey bore the pain without concern for the pain and suffering.

Without soiled his mind with complaining and anger. His mind was in a normal and clear state. This was khanti pāramī. If the monkey did not have patience, with the severe pain and everything was spoiled. Even the monkey was helping to save his life with a lot of difficulties and effort and did not have any disappointment and anger was upekkhā pāramī. At that time if he had anger and disappointment in the brahman, it would spoil his goodness.

Tipiṭakadhara Yaw Sayadaw gave a talk on human strength and mentioned about patience (Sayadaw was the 5th one who could recite the three piṭakas by heart). Patience is the foundation dhamma of sīla, samādhi and paññā. Only with khanti and has progressed. Winning or not winning, good or bad has to be patient with them. With patience is a noble quality.

Even dāna—giving is connecting with patience. It is giving up and sacrificing. Patience is strength and make someone noble and outstanding. There are five benefits of patience;

- (1) Love by people
- (2) Calm and without dangers
- (3) Free from the faults of anger
- (4) Die with a clear mind
- (5) Good rebirth (sugati).

Patience and right exertion (sammā-vāyāma) can destroy the mental heat (i.e., kilesa heat). It can burn out kilesa defilement and called tapa—austerity. The source of mettā (loving friendliness) is patience. Anger (dosa) has three stages; killing, disturbing and happening in mind. And its results are; short life span, have illnesses and look ugly. Non-anger (adosa) also has three kinds; doing merits always with non-anger, non-hatred comes from patience, and non-hatred comes from mettā bhāvanā (meditation on loving kindness).

With mindfulness is the way of living alone, and with mettā is the way of living with others. Bodhisatta wanted to develop the perfection of patience, he had to take rebirths mostly in the human world. If he had the chances to take rebirths in heavenly and brahma god worlds with merits and jhānas, he would never stay there very long. With resolution (adhiṭṭhāna), he came down to the human world for rebirth.

The human world was the best place for fulfilling the ten perfections. The human world is the best place for doing all kinds of wholesomeness. We must sacrifice the human body with Dhamma. The calmness of mind relates to patience. It means complete with sīla and samādhi. With patience and sīla and samādhi develop.

In the Buddhavagga of Dhammapada, Ven. Ānanda raised the question to the Buddha on the Fundamental Instructions to the monks by the past Buddhas. The Buddha answered with three verses and one of them was including patience.

Verse 184: Khanti paramaṃ tapo titikkha,
nibbānaṃ paramaṃ vadanti buddhā;
na hi pabbajito parūpaghāti,
na samaṇo hoti paraṃ viheṭṭhayanto.

“The best training in austerity is patience,
“Nibbāna is the Supreme,” said the Buddhas;
A monk does not harm others,
One who harms others is not a monk.”

Therefore, patience is the cause of progress and nobility in worldly and supramundane matters. Patience is not reacting to any bad thing someone has done to oneself. So, it is a quality difficult to practice. This is a Dhamma leads to peace and happiness to oneself and others. Therefore, the Buddha said that patience and forbearance was the noblest practice. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha mentioned the five results of patience, which I have already mentioned before.

But also there are five faults without any patience. These are; hate by others; has dangers; with many faults arise in this present and future lives; a bad dying; and after death, not has a good destination, i.e., the woeful planes of existence. In the world, people encounter problems are the same. The differences are in the ways to deal with problems, and to solve them. Because of ignorance and foolishness, small problems become bigger and worse.

We can see all these things in each country and international levels, as examples: Syria Civil War, Israel and Palestine Problem, terrorists and terrorism, etc.. We cannot achieve peace, harmony and happiness with the ways of tit for tat, aggression, violence, hatred, ill-will, etc. The many ways to solve problems are wholesome dhammas.

The most basic one is wholesome education, patience and forbearance, tolerance, love, sympathy, compassion, kindness, concern for others, etc. Interference by some superpowers also made things worse and destroyed the involved countries and citizens. They exploited the situations for political or economic purposes.

In the Saṃyutta Nikāya, there is a sutta called “Vepacitti or Patience” (SN. 11.4 Vepacittisuttaṃ). There the Buddha mentioned the teaching of Sakka (king of the 33 gods) to Mātali (the charioteer). It was about the qualities of patience which all people should follow it. This discourse is especially important for politicians and political leaders to deal with conflict.

Sakka was not an ordinary deva king. He was an intelligent, wise and noble being and asked some important questions to the Buddha. His teaching on patience was as follow. Once in the past the devas and asuras were in battle. In that battle, the devas won and the asuras were defeated. The Tāvatiṃsa devas bound Vepacitti by his four limbs and neck brought him to Sakka in the Sudhamma assembly hall. When Sakka was entering and leaving the hall, Vepacitti, abused and reviled him with rude and harsh words. Mātali, the charioteer, saw this and said to Sakka.

Did Sakka from fear and weakness, endured Vepacitti patiently by listening to his harsh words? Sakka replied that he was neither through fear nor weakness and

patience with the asura. He was a wise person and should not engage in combat with a fool. Mātali continued that if no one would keep the fools in check and they would express their anger even more.

So, the wise should restrain the fool with extreme punishment urgently. Then Sakka responded wisely. In his view, the only way to check the fool was when one's enemy was angry and not responded to him. Instead, one maintained one's peace mindfully. Mātali said to Sakka that this way of dealing with the enemy was faulty.

Because by practicing patient endurance at that time, the enemy would think; "He endures me out of fear." Then the fool would harm you more. At last Sakka taught Mātali the qualities of patience and the outcomes of anger.

Whether or not someone thinks; "He endures me out of fear." For one's own good nothing is better than patience. When someone has strength and should patiently endure a weakling, this is the supreme patience. The weak person also must be patient. The strength most people think is not the real strength, but the strength of the fools. Guarded by Dhamma that a person is strong, and no one can reproach him.

Respond to anger with anger makes things worse for oneself. Not respond anger with anger and one wins a battle hard to win. Someone should practice for the welfare of both, for himself and others. If the enemy is in anger and one should maintain his peace with mindfulness. In these ways, someone solves the problem for both his own and others. If people take him as a fool, then they are unskilled in Dhamma.

The quality of patience and forbearance is not only difficult to practice and develop but also difficult to appreciate them. Most people want to react instantly without tolerance. This is not surprising, because in the world there are more fools than wise. Not understanding the Dhamma, we do not know how to deal with problems properly and rightly. There are two kinds of enemy or foe; i.e., internal and external.

The internal enemies are more dangerous and harmful than the external ones. Even the external ones come from the internal ones. This is not difficult to see. External pollution are the outcome of internal pollution of the mind, i.e., greed, hatred, delusion, etc.

External enemies only can harm us in this life. But the internal ones not only this life, but many lives to come. Therefore, patience, forbearance, tolerance are stopping the inner enemies from creating dangers and problems for us.

The Buddha also said in the Dhammapada verse 103: “A man may conquer a million enemies in battles, but one who conquers himself is the greatest of all conquerors.” Even one defeats one’s enemy with reaction; the outcome does not benefit for both. The loser suffers in this life and the winner has enemies. (See the Palestinian and Israelis conflicts—the process is never ended, because of impatience and intolerance, tit for tat policies).

The loser suffers in this life and the winner has to bear his unwholesome kammic results in the future. There is also the loser has a strong grudge towards the winner, which will follow to saṃsāra for a long time to come. This was evident in the strong grudge (hatred and ill-will) Devadatta had towards the Buddha started from a long distant past.

The strength of the fools is not real strength. The power of patience, forbearance and tolerance is the real strength. Only with non-hatred and non-violence can overcome hatred and violence, and solve the problems and make peace. There was a saying that the quality of patience could realize Nibbāna. This is on the spiritual matter. This is true because patience is the foundation of sīla, samādhi and paññā.

In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha instructed the monks on the 10 Dhammas as protectors, and one of them was patience. The Buddha usually taught the monks to have patience with the following things; heat, cold, weather, hunger and thirst, bitten by insects, criticism by others, unpleasant feelings of the physical body, etc. Therefore, patience is a protector and the power of strength to overcome mundane matters and to overcome difficulties in spiritual endeavor.

We can see this in the lives of political leaders such as Mahatma Gandhiji, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. The bodhisatta cultivate the perfection of patience to the highest level, and we can read them in the jātaka stories, such as—Khantivādi Hermit and Prince Temiya Jātakas. These stories make the Buddhist readers awe-inspiring and hair raising phenomena and will never forget them.

In the Khantivādi Hermit story (Jāt. 313 Khantivādi Jātaka), the bodhisatta was a hermit and taught the Doctrine of Patience. The evil king was the past life of Devadatta who had a strong grudge towards the bodhisatta from one of his past lives. Now, he had the chance to torture the bodhisatta to test his patience. He cut off his limbs one by one to test his patience, from nose, ears, arms and legs. The bodhisatta bore all these physical sufferings with patience, forbearance, endurance and tolerance and still declared his Doctrine of Patience. At last, because of the nobility and greatness of the bodhisatta and the evilness of the king, the earth opened up and swallowed him to the hell realm.

Prince Temiya Story was very remarkable (Jāt. 538 Mūgapakkha Jātaka). In this bodhisatta story, we can read the perfections of resolution (adhiṭṭhāna), patience (khanti) and renunciation (nekkhamma). His patience and endurance to all the difficult tests were awe-inspiring. It seems to me except a highly developed bodhisatta would bear and succeed them.

Even though most Buddhists cannot imitate the bodhisatta to the higher levels, at least should cultivate the basic levels. If we imitate and learn from popular worldlings such as tycoons, politicians, actors, actresses, pop singers, etc. and increase our defilement or polluted our minds. Therefore, let us cultivate patience for peace to oneself and others in daily life. Here we have to remember that we have to be patient with not only unpleasant things and matters but also with pleasant things and matters.

The best known Mahaghandhayone Sayadawgyi U Janakabhivamsa had this saying: “Someone has patience with good and bad worldly conditions is an outstanding one.” The worldly conditions are the eight loka dhammas: gain and loss, status and disgrace, censure and praise, pleasure, and pain. Indeed, the quality of patience is the highest protection with a blessing.

27. Compliance/Obedience

The Pāli word *sovacassatā* is compliance or obedience. There was another Pāli word in the Metta Sutta is *suvaco cassa*—easy to instruct. They are a very close relationship. Only obedient people are easy to instruct and easy to talk with them. This quality is also very important for one's progress in the right direction of mundane and supramundane welfare.

Therefore, obedience and easy to instruct are connecting with wholesome things and matters. With unwholesome things and matters are ignorant and stupid, and not these qualities. All these we can see in the cases of Devadatta (The Buddha's cousin) and Prince Ajātasattu. Devadatta was not compliant and heeding to the Buddha's admonitions that at last came to destruction and ruin.

Prince Ajātasattu was following Devadatta's evil advice and killed his father King Bimbisāra and missed the chance of realization of Dhamma. A humble person is not proud or conceited and easy to teach. We can see these in the cases of novice Rāhula (the Buddha's son) and the old monk Rādha.

Ven. Webu Sayadawgyi was the most venerable monk in Burma. In many of his Dhamma talks mentioned *sovacassatā*—compliance very often as a quality in practice. That is paying heed to teachers, sages, wise and noble ones to follow their advice and instructions. That is very true. We do not have this quality that most of us still roaming in the *saṃsāra* of sufferings.

Compliance or obedience is very important in societies. This quality has to be started from family life and schools. Obedient and easy to teach children and students are loved by their parents and teachers. Therefore, these children are progressing in life because they follow in the right directions. Nowadays, the situations are different. We allow too much freedom to children and students.

Now children are difficult to teach and admonish. Instead, parents and teachers comply with their desire and views. Now we heard a lot of complaints from parents and teachers about these things. Why these things happen nowadays and not before? Because children and youths have a lot of freedom of rein as they can do what they think and like. Parents and teachers are not their parents and teachers. And they become parents and teachers, and not as children and students.

They are influenced by many kinds of media. Media are their parents and teachers

and their educational departments. More than half a century ago, Mogok Sayadawgyi mentioned a very important point of Dhamma to U Tun Tin. (At that time a young man and one of the frequent listener of his talks). These words were also a prediction on science and technology to mankind.

Sayadawgyi started teaching on meditation practice after the second World War, i.e., 1945. His talks were not recorded until 1954. Only in 1955 onwards had proper recordings and it was invaluable Dhamma treasures for Buddhists.

Once he mentioned to U Tun Tin as follow; “Maung Tun Tin! With the progress of science and can record the voices/sound. If we can use it properly/rightly lead to Nibbāna. If we use it wrongly and go into the Woks (i.e., hell cauldron or hell wok).” Sayadaw’s prediction becomes evident nowadays. The problems are not lying with science and technology but with the human mind or saying rightly with the defiled mind. And all the fake progress are leading by greed and delusion, which are the causes of sufferings.

Now we see all the social problems and natural problems as the outcomes. Most people do not see the whole picture of anything and matter. And also they see things and matters superficially and very short-sighted views. They are carrying away by defilement. But the Buddha and noble beings were quite different. They saw the whole picture and penetrated it in depth, which extended to the future.

If we study and research of the suttas, these were not only teaching us for the present life but also for the future to come, even extended to the saṃsāra. Scientists, politicians and economists, can be intelligent and stupid but not wise. Therefore, intelligence and wisdom are different things. A wise person is also intelligent but not stupid.

An intelligent person is not necessarily wise. Even sometimes, they are dangerous. This conclusion is not wrong. Internal and external pollution of man and nature testified this point.

As already mentioned before wholesome dhamma has a connection with other wholesome dhammas; wholesome and unwholesome are also in the same way. A disobedient person is not easy to teach and admonish. It is likely that he also disrespect to others (parents, elders and teachers). He is stubborn and follows his ways. We can see some children and students retort to their parents and teachers, even sometimes insult them with actions.

If they grew up in this way, their lives would be in downfall for sure. So, parents and

teachers should instill these qualities in children. Then they will have blessings and protections in their lives, and also to the societies. The following story in the Saṃyutta Nikāya was good for reflection on this subject.

A Thief of Scent

A certain monk was dwelling in a certain woodland thicket. When he had returned from his alms round and after the meal, he had a habit. He used to descent into a pond and sniff the scent of lotus flowers there. The devatā (female deity) inhabited the woodland thicket concerned his practice, desired his good and to stir up a sense of urgency (saṃvega) in him, and approached him. She reproached him as follow.

The monk sniffed the scent of lotus flowers which had not been given. So, this was a factor of theft, and became a thief of scent. The monk responded that he did not take it or damaged it. And only sniffed the scent from a distance. So, what was the reason to accuse him as a thief of scent? But there were also others who dug up the lotus stalks and damaged the flowers.

They had rough behaviors and why did not she reproach them. The devatā replied that these people were already rough and fierce, and like a soiled and dirty cloth. So, she had nothing to concern for them. But the monk was different. Because he was a person without blemish, and always in quest of purity. Even a small bit of unwholesomeness appeared as big as the cloud.

Then the monk accepted her admonition and thanked her for the advice. And requested her to admonish him again in the future whenever she saw such a deed. The deity reflected that this monk might become negligent and would think a deity was looking after his welfare. Therefore, she rejected his request and proposal. And told him that she was not his hired servant. He should know himself what was good for his welfare and the way to a good destination.

The monk in this story was seemed to be a good monk who loved nature and easy to be admonished and compliant. But he still lacked restraint with fragrant flowers. Even it seemed he was attached to it as a habit. For most people take small matters and things as insignificance. But for the wise, sages and noble beings even they take the minor things as important for mental development.

If someone can take care of the small things and for the serious ones not become problematic for them. Therefore, the Buddha warned the monks even to see the slightest thing as a fault. Even small problems are more important than the bigger

ones. Most of the bigger problems come from, the smaller ones. From nothing and it becomes something. So, most of the human problems or social problems are created by human cravings and ignorance.

In this story, even an unseen being wanted to help good people. This was not the only story in the Nikāyas. Ven. Channa, who was proud and stubborn and not easy to admonish and teach by other monks. He was born with the bodhisatta on the same day and very close to him. So, he was very conceited and not changed his bad behaviors even after admonished by the Buddha.

The Buddha, on the night of his parinibbāna, imposed the brahma punishment on him: he was to be left to his ways without anyone to teach or correct him. This punishment made his life difficult. So, he corrected his conceit and stubbornness and went to see Ven. Ānanda for help. Ven. Ānanda had learned by heart all the discourses of the Buddha that he gave him a suitable discourse, and then Ven. Channa became an arahant.

So, we can see how much important the quality of compliance. In the Dhammapada, one has to show gratitude to someone who points out our faults. We should take it as someone shows us the buried treasures in the earth. That is true because most people cannot easily to recognize one's own mistakes. But easy to see others' faults.

Only by knowing one's own mistakes that one can have the chance to correct it. The best way is to check your own mistakes and faults very often. So, it needs mindfulness. To rely on oneself is better than on others.

In helping or teaching others, we also need to be careful. Sometimes it can get into troubles. Importance to know the time, the place, the person involves and how to use words. The following jāta story described these points. Once the bodhisatta was a hermit. One day he crossed the river by boat with other passengers.

The boatman was a bad-tempered man. And he never mentioned the boat fee to passengers beforehand. Only after passengers arrived at the other shore and he charged the boat fee. This behavior of his often caused the quarrels with the passengers.

This time also happened the same thing, at first with the passengers. At last, he turned towards the hermit for the fee. The bodhisatta told him that he did not have any money. So, gave teaching to him as a fee. The bodhisatta hermit advised the boatman to declare the fee beforehand. And continued to exhort him that should not be angry, the outcome of anger was not good to him, etc. His anger was already

arising with the passengers and after what he heard from the hermit made him angrier.

So, he beat the bodhisatta on the spot. At that time his wife sent foods for him arrived there. She tried to pull apart her husband from the hermit. This foolish man was so angry that he turned to his wife and kicked her away. Unfortunately, at that time she was pregnant and terminated the pregnancy. He was also arrested and put in jail because the hermit was the king's teacher. The hermit gave the same teaching to the king and rewarded with a village of 100,000 income tax money. But the bodhisatta rejected the reward.

This time the hermit received the blows from the boatman. The qualities of compliance and easy to teach and instruct are very important for worldly and spiritual progress. People want to be peaceful and happy in life should develop it. Parents should take this point seriously. And have to train their children to be obedient and respectful.

These qualities are ingrained in sages and noble beings. To become a good person it needs this quality. Therefore, the parents want their children to progress in life and not to be worried about them should put effort to train them. So, the Buddha taught; compliance was the highest protection and blessing.

28. Seeing contemplative

The Pāli word for contemplatives is *samaṇa*, including the ariyas—noble beings and yogis practicing for overcoming defilement. Here it includes all monks, but also can count sages and wise people. The best *samaṇas* to see are arahants and sekhas (one already has the realization of the lower stages, i.e., still in training for full realization).

Seeing contemplatives include asking Dhamma, listening and practicing Dhamma. Seeing noble beings has a great effect on someone. Not only at the time of the Buddha, even today, someone has a strong inclination to Dhamma knows the effects. It makes one's mind peaceful and changes one's life. Most people not sensitive and aware of the energies around us either living beings or nature, such as a tree, etc.

I have some of these experiences before. Once in New Zealand, some monks were invited to a house for paritta chanting. A man over 60 died in a hospital with cancer. Before he died said to his wife that he would come back and stay with her. It seemed he was attached to her and the properties left behind. Therefore, become a ghost there. Three monks and the car driver went there. As soon as I entered the house and felt a very strong unpleasant and gloomy feeling of the place.

And then a very strong putrid smell arose in the whole room. It smelled to the end of the chanting. After that, it disappeared. After getting out of the house, I asked the other three did they had any smell in the house. Only the senior monk answered as yes. The other two did not aware or feel it at all. This was strange, indeed. It was quite a strong repulsive smell and they did not smell it.

In New Zealand, there is some preserved forest with very big and old trees. By walking in there also one can feel the energies of the big trees and forests. There was an old practicing monk in Taiwan and he was an adept in *samādhi*. He could be in *samādhi* state for many days. He passed away at the age of 95 in the *samādhi* state.

After over 20 years of his passing away and I went to his place where he used to sit in *samādhi*. This was a small room and now became a shrine room with his cane chair which he used to sit *samādhi*. This room pervades with peaceful energy and one can feel it as soon as there.

Seeing contemplatives very often pervade wholesome energies to one's mind is a blessing. It is also related to the blessing of the association with the wise. Seeing contemplatives (*samaṇa*) is a higher blessing than associate with good and moral

people. By associate with good and moral people, we can also become one of them. Without becoming a good and moral person, we will never interest to see and associate with contemplatives.

By seeing samaṇa, we can learn the higher Dhamma from them and follow the path of transcending dukkha. There were many stories in the suttas on this point. Some lay people by seeing the Buddha or one of his disciples their lives were changed. Some of them before had wrong views with the wrong teachers after seeing the Buddha and his disciples had the right views and even some had the realization of Dhamma.

In the Majjhima Nikāya, there was a discourse called Upāli Sutta (MN 56 Upālisuttaṃ). Upāli was a very well known and wealthy lay disciple of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (The Jain Teacher Mahāvīra). Mahāvīra sent Upāli to see the Buddha for the argument on certain aspects of the law of kamma. He thought Upāli was so bright that and could defeat the Buddha.

Nigaṇṭha stressed on the physical and verbal actions being more productive resultant effects. But the Buddha viewed the mental actions (volition) as the most important factor. The Buddha explained to Upāli with examples and converted him. Nātaputta was overwhelmed by intense wrath over the loss of his most prominent lay supporter and then later passed away.

Also, there are two suttas in the Majjhima Nikāya, about the wandering ascetic Saccaka: Cūlasaccaka Sutta (MN 35 Cūlasaccakasuttaṃ) and Mahāsaccaka Sutta (MN 36 Mahāsaccakasuttaṃ). In the first discourse, he was conceited with his skill in debate and went to see the Buddha for debate. The debate was on the topic of atta (self).

Saccaka took the five khandhas (aggregates); body, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness as atta (self). It was the self who enjoyed the fruits of good action and suffered the results of bad action. The Buddha refuted his wrong view as the five khandhas were not self (anatta). Because they were subjected to the laws of inconstant, suffering and not self (anicca, dukkha and anatta). Therefore, these were not under the control of anyone.

At last he was admitted his defeat. He did not become a follower but invited the Buddha and the monks for next day meals. In the second discourse, after his debate, he met the Buddha again sometimes. He asked the Buddha on the cultivation of mind and body. He knew only the wrong practices by other teachers. Then the Buddha explained to him the various practices he had followed before with mistakes.

At last he found the middle way—The Noble Eightfold Path without a teacher and it led to the realization and became a Buddha. Also, in the end, he did not become a disciple. But with these two meetings or seeing the Buddha and he carried the potential seed of enlightenment with him. According to the commentary, after the Buddha Dhamma flourished in Sri Lanka, he was born there. Later became a monk with the practice & he had the realization as an arahant.

Another interesting discourse in the Majjhima Nikāya is the Dog-Duty Ascetic Discourse (Kukkuravatika Sutta, MN 57 [Kukkuravatikasuttaṃ](#)). Two naked ascetics, Puṇṇa and Seniya the cow-duty and the dog-duty practisers went to see the Buddha. They asked the Buddha about the results of their practices. They held the wrong views of with these practices could transcend dukkha or after died had good rebirths.

The Buddha told them if they practiced like cow and dog after death became cow and dog. If holding these wrong views would fall into hells. (What about human-dog culture in today world?) They regretted their behaviors, which came from meeting with the wrong teachers. Then the Buddha taught them the four types of action; black, white, mixed (black with white) and neither of them (i.e., The Noble Eightfold Path). At the end of the discourse, Puṇṇa became a Buddhist. Seniya became a monk and after with practice, he became an arahant. This discourse is warning us of the consequences of wrong teachings and teachers.

Here I want to present a present-day story of an Italian yogi. This came from a Dhamma talk by Ven. U Ādiccaramsī. Eduardo an Italian who held a Ph.D. degree was practicing mindfulness of breathing every day for two years. According to him, he never missed it and sat for two hours. Later he went to Burma and looking for a teacher. And then met with the venerable who was living in a forest and developed his practice. The venerable was a lecturer in Philosophy before and had a wide knowledge of Dhamma. After sometimes under his guidance, Eduardo penetrated anatta doctrine with vipassanā contemplation.

At night time interview, he presented his experience to the teacher. At the end the teacher said; “I think you come to an end. But don’t believe what I say this. You can try it out by yourself.” And then he taught him how to enter into the fruition state. He was succeeded in the test and continued to develop it in Italy. Then he could do it for many hours. Later he wrote a letter to the venerable and said that now he was teaching vipassanā in St. Peters burg in Russia.

There are many things to say about seeing contemplatives, not only on spiritual

practices. Monks who are wise and have a lot of knowledge in Dhamma can give a lot of help. There were many teachings by the Buddha on worldly matters. If we carefully study and research will admire and amaze the great wisdom of the Buddha. No human or any living being (i.e., any heavenly being—deva or brahma god) can surpass him. Many worldly matters and problems which are on family, society, or international levels can be solved with the Buddha's teachings. This is not an exaggeration.

Only that most people do not know his teachings and not using it that all the human problems arise in the world. Most human sufferings are unnecessary, except the natural ones—such as aging, sickness and death. Most human problems and sufferings are mind made. Therefore, understanding and penetrating our mind can stop all these unfortunate things to happen. Seeing contemplatives, wise, sages and noble beings is not an ordinary or insignificant matter. It is the highest blessing and protection—to oneself and others.

Most human beings are worry and fear about aging, sickness and death. These unpleasant things are part of nature and can teach us a lot about how to live a meaningful life. With proper and wise attention and contemplation can develop our mind and life. From aging, sickness and death can develop love, compassion, kindness, forgiveness and concern for others because we are in the same situations.

When someone is in a situation of terminally ill or dying and good to see the monks or invite them to see the patient or dying person, it can help to alleviate mental suffering and has a good death. In the suttas, the Buddha and some of his great disciples were helping the sick and dying persons, whether monks or lay disciples.

There is a sutta in the Aṅguttara Nikāya called “The Unsurpassed Things—Anuttariya Sutta (AN. 6.30 Anuttariyasuttaṃ)”. The meaning of anuttariya is noble because nothing is better than that. The Buddha taught six kinds of them. For example, people are looking and choosing the best things. Sometimes the Buddha's views and worldlings are opposite. The Buddha's views were always noble and seeing matters in complete and far-reaching. Worldlings not seeing things in the longer terms. Therefore, they have short-sighted views, and concern only with the present.

This is one of the most important causes for nowadays human beings (politicians, economists, businessmen, scientists and nearly all walks of life) out of greed and delusion create a lot of problems and sufferings in today world. Wise, sages and noble beings are seeing things and matters in depth with right views.

Worldlings see things and matters superficially with wrong views that take wrong

things as right. With different views and have different results. This sutta is interesting and we can learn many things from it. It is also a connection with seeing contemplatives. The Buddha mentioned six kinds of them. Each kind can divide into two kinds. The Buddha's views and the views of the worldlings. The six unsurpassed things are:

- (1) The unsurpassed sight,
- (2) The unsurpassed hearing,
- (3) The unsurpassed gain,
- (4) The unsurpassed training,
- (5) The unsurpassed service,
- (6) The unsurpassed recollection.

(1) The unsurpassed sight: dassanānuttariyaṃ

With the eyes, we can see many things. But there are also things that cannot see with the normal eyes. Now, with the help of science and technology, we create gadgets, televisions, computers, cell phones, etc. can see more things at any time. What are the things people use to see and watch? These are depending on interest and necessities. There are useful and proper things to see and watch. There are also harmful and improper things to see and watch by wasting precious times. But usually, people want to see harmful and improper things for entertainments at leisure times.

Even there are many accidents when people using cell phones by crossing roads and driving cars. People are too addicted to these things that it becomes a habit and they will use it at any time and any place. It is good to ask a question to oneself. If we are seeing and watching these many things (here not only cell phones and all the other things) what do we get, from it? And what are the benefits? It becomes wholesome or unwholesome?

Seeing the Buddha, arahants, noble beings and monks is the unsurpassed sight. From these people, we can gain seven benefits from it. These are for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of dukkha and discontent, for acquiring the true method and for the realization of Nibbāna. All of these are true values.

If we go and see a white elephant or a lovely panda bear in China, these are just seeing only, and it brings no other benefits to us. There are many worldly phenomena and matters are like this. We waste a lot of money and time for them. In the Buddha Kassapa's time, our bodhisatta (i.e., the past life of Buddha Gautama) was a young

brahman named Jotipāla. Even though he was born at the time of a Buddha and quite mature in developing his perfections to become a Buddha (It was already more than four incalculable aeons— asaṅkheyya-kappa) but he still did not want to see the Buddha Kassapa and the monks. (MN.81 Ghaṭṭikārasuttaṃ)

Because he was a brahman with his view of Brahmanism, anyhow, his best friend Ghaṭṭikāra, the potter forced him to see the Buddha after he was seeing the Buddha and listening Dhamma talk and became a monk. Before Sāriputta met the Buddha and he had a wrong teacher named Saṅjaya. One day he met Ven. Assaji who was on his alms round. Ven. Assaji's serenity and graceful deportment attracted Sāriputta. So, he approached him and asked about his teacher and the teaching.

At last Ven. Assaji gave him a short instruction on Dhamma and Sāriputta became a stream-winner on the spot. There was another story about Aṅgulimāla, the notorious robber and murderer who killed people for their fingers. The day he met his mother, he needed only a finger to complete his mission for one thousand fingers. The Buddha knew all these and came in between them. Without seeing the Buddha, he was sure to kill his mother for the finger he needed.

The Buddha saved him from killing his mother. This was a very heavy unwholesome action and would fall into Hell after death. By seeing the Buddha and listening to his teaching, he gave up his evil deeds. Later ordained as a monk and practiced became an arahant. Therefore, seeing the samaṇa is the best seeing (dassanānuttariya) and the highest blessing (maṅgalam-uttama).

For people who do not have the chances of seeing samaṇas they need to be very careful how to use the many media. Because there are many unwholesome things and matters are going on. Out of greed and hatred, some foolish people using the media exploit and harm others. Even politicians or some world leaders using them to harm the opposition. With the help of science to harm people are more easier and have great consequences than before.

(2) The unsurpassed hearing: suṇantānuttariya

We have ears and hear many types of sound and voices. Most people are not using their ears properly or wisely. Therefore, there are a lot of noise pollution going on. Mostly these are artificial sound and voices by men and barking dogs. Even pollution of the ear can be divided into 2; material sound and human voices or speech. In modern-day noise, pollution are big problems. Human life is not quiet anymore. There are noises or sound from machines, animals (especially dogs barking) and

music, etc.

I have no doubt all these noisy and unpleasant sounds harm the physical body if subject too much to them. There were already research or experiment with water to sound noises and voices. Noisy sounds (include violent music), ugly and unwholesome speeches made the water crystals very ugly and disgusting. Gentle, sweet, polite and peaceful sound and speech made the water crystals beautiful and majestic. Worse than these pollution are speech pollution from the media; televisions, movies, music, etc.

If we use them in an unwholesome way, one creates unwholesome karmas and also polluted the listener's mind. It is harmful to both; the entertainers and the viewers. (with hearing and seeing). There are many kinds of harm going on by media which are using by evil people. It is quicker and easier to harm people than before. Now you can kill hundreds of people in a second.

Most people like to listen to music and singing. These only give temporary pleasure (i.e., classical music and pleasant music, not include violent music and songs). People want to hear strange things and gossips. Therefore, there are a lot of meaningless entertainments in the media. What benefits we get from them?!

Here I want to emphasize "The Burning Discourse" (SN. 35.28 Ādittasuttaṃ) in the Saṃyutta-nikāya by the Buddha. It was quite suitable for today human beings. Most of our six sense-doors (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind), sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, mental object, six consciousness, six contacts, and the feelings come from these are burning with the fire of lust, hatred and delusion.

The eye and ear are burning with polluted media sound and noises. The nose is burning with polluted air. The tongue is burning with pesticides, many kinds of chemicals and polluted water. The body is burning with the severe climate changes by temperature rising. Our minds are burning with lust, hatred; delusion come from the polluted media and matters. Can these things free us from dukkha? Do these things and matters can reduce our defilement?

There are a lot of things, not helping our many problems and difficulties in life. If we get lost in them, even become harmful. The wholesome things and matters are medicines of the mind and it become educations and the unwholesome ones will become poisons and harm everyone. For living beings, especially humans, seeing and listening are very important parts of our lives. How to use them properly and wisely is very important? The gods in rūpaloka (fine-material realm) use only the eyes and ears. Nose, tongue and body sensations are not useful for them.

Why is that? Because their minds are pure and they only need the eyes to see the Buddha and noble beings, and with ears listen to their Dhamma. These two factors of seeing contemplatives and listening Dhamma are prerequisites for practicing Dhamma, and enlightenment. There were a lot of stories in the suttas mentioned about monks and lay people who met contemplatives and listened to Dhamma and their lives were changed dramatically. For the Buddha, the unsurpassed hearing or noble listening was on Dhamma—Dhamma suṇantānuttariya.

(3) The unsurpassed gain—lābhānuttariya

This is a very wide subject to talk about. The Buddha mentioned some of them by common people, such as someone gains a son, a wife, wealth and various goods, etc. There are many kinds human beings want to get or attain. These things are depending on their desire and interest. Some of them are necessary to have and some are not. Some of the things are for pleasure and some are for knowledge.

People use money, time and effort to get them. Some of them after attaining, it leads to stress, problems and sufferings; e.g., money, power. Because people cannot use them properly or wisely. And then by losing or lost them lead to sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Nowadays, humans are crazy to get more money. It becomes the mad, mad world. What for? For indulging in sensual pleasure which is low, common, worldly, ignoble and unbeneficial. These made people become more and more discontent.

So, they do all sorts of things and matters to satisfy their desire and craving. This harm themselves and others, even to nature and environments. For the Buddha to have or gain faith (saddhā) in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha was the unsurpassed thing to have or gain—lābhānuttariya. Faith in the Buddha's teaching had levels. It can be blind faith, ordinary faith and confident or conviction (the highest level). The Buddha never encouraged the lowest level of blind faith which could be false or true, and it could be dangerous and harmful, e.g., some modern cults (Faith in religions is a serious matter and we should not take it lightly).

Buddhists should only have ordinary faith and confidence or conviction and not the blind faith. Start the Buddha's teachings with ordinary faith; it comes from study, research and wise reflection. With this faith can have interest and follow the teachings with the practice. By practice and we have the direct experiences which confirm the truth of the Buddha-Dhamma.

And then will come confident or unshakable true faith. Whatever his religious background, if someone only has blind faith in wrong faith, and then declares has true faith, it will harm himself and others. This point is very important for spiritual people, especially for religious leaders. Only someone who has intelligent faith will have an interest in the Dhamma. Although faith (saddhā) is not included in the Noble Eightfold Path, it has close relationship with wisdom or discernment or right view. As spiritual faculties, they have to be in balance (i.e., faith and wisdom).

In one of Mogok Sayadaw's talks, he said about faith. [The Buddha answered to some questions put by the fierce spirit Āḷavaka were: Through conviction (saddhā) one crosses over the flood (i.e., the flood of the wrong view—diṭṭhi-ogha) (SN. 10.12 Āḷavakasutta). Through heedfulness (appamāda—mindful diligence in wholesomeness), one crosses over the rugged sea. Through persistence, one overcomes dukkha. Through discernment, a person is purified.], So, the Buddha taught to Āḷavaka that with conviction closed the doors to woeful planes.

This is the faith of a stream-winner (sotāpanna), or unshakable faith. By faith, one crosses over the flood of the wrong view. You must believe that it leads to stream entry (sotāpatti magga). Why you do the practice? You do it because believing in the Buddha's words and the teacher's words if the Buddha and teacher said that you must see impermanence and with the practice, you will discern it. You discern it because you have practiced with faith. For doing the practice, let faith leads you.

Another point what the Buddha taught was with heedfulness (mindfulness) could cross over the four floods. (i.e., become sotāpanna to arahant). In the round of existences (saṃsāra) the most miserable places are the four woeful planes. The sufferings there are unthinkable. If we get with whatever means for wealth and power will never safe for falling into it. Therefore, the Buddha said that faith (saddhā) was the unsurpassed gain—lābhānuttariya.

(4) The unsurpassed training—sikkhānuttariya

This is a very interesting and wide subject need to contemplate thoroughly. There is a lot to say on these matters. Here the Buddha mentioned some of them—train in elephantry, horsemanship, chariotry, archery, swordsmanship and in various fields. Human being quite different from other beings is on knowledge. It starts from birth to death. Humans are a thirst for knowledge. But does everyone get the right knowledge? So, learning, training and knowledge are education.

Generally can separate into two groups; unwholesome and wholesome knowledge or

educations. Even some worldly wholesome knowledge can become unwholesome by misusing it, e.g., pesticide and other chemicals. Only with the training of the Buddha-Dhamma is becoming perfectly wholesome knowledge. At least a human being knows livelihood. For this purpose, we have to start school education from young. But most human beings neglect the importance of basic education or training, i.e., moral education.

Without this fundamental training, whatever worldly knowledge maybe can lead to problems and sufferings. The world arms industries in many superpowers; U.S, Russia, China, France, etc. based on sciences and technologies. Science, technology and economics should be used for the welfare of the human race to bring, peace, happiness and harmony. Many developed countries use a lot of money, human resources, times and earth resources produce weapons of mass destruction to create problems and conflicts around the world. If humans not using it, what is the point of producing them?

So, they have to create problems and conflicts for using it. These leaders and governments create evil kamma for themselves to harm others, but they take it as great fortunes. This money can help poor and underdeveloped countries to have a better life. If we cannot solve the poverty in many countries, and civil wars, refugees and economic migrants problems will never stop. These problems have already happened in across Europe. Competition in nuclear arsenals is also a very stupid and crazy thing a human can do. It cannot bring anything good to the human race, but only dangers and destruction.

Therefore, fundamental knowledge or moral education is extremely important. Without this foundation, even wholesome knowledge can create problems and sufferings to family life and society. So, human knowledge is use to solve poverty and other problems and not for selfishness, exploitation and harming. Therefore, human worldly knowledge has two kinds; wholesome and unwholesome. There is also a special knowledge or transcendental knowledge, or super knowledge only came from a Buddha.

Even wholesome worldly knowledge by using it wrongly, foolishly and stupidly bring a lot of harms, because it is based on craving, greed, ill-will, hatred, delusion, and ignorance. Therefore, the Buddha said that all worldly pleasure came from worldly knowledge are low and ignoble. These cannot free one from a round of existence (*saṃsāra*), not free from *dukkha*, not make the mind calm and peaceful, cannot develop penetrative knowledge, not lead to right knowing, not leading to the goal of *Nibbāna* which known by the *ariyas*. Sometimes people are too ignorant and stupid that they study, learn and imitate everything. There was an interesting ghost (*peta*)

story on this point.

Miserable Strange Ghost:

One day Ven. Mahāmoggallāna came down from the Gijjha-kūṭa hill in Rājagaha. On the way, he met a very strange miserable ghost (peta). This peta head was pounding with many iron hammers and he fell on to the ground. And then he became normal again and the ghost got up again. As soon as he got up, all the iron hammers fell on his head again. It went on like this for non-stop. So, the Venerable asked him; “Oh! Man, why are you like a crazy one—like a deer, the whole body is trembling with fear and running to here and there? Indeed you had done the evil deed in the past and because of that, you were crying loudly with miserable voice. Who are you?”

Before the hammers appeared again and struck his head, he answered to the Ven. As follow; “I am a peta and because of my evil deed, I had been fallen into hell before. The result of my evil deed is not finished yet. So, I have to continue for it as a peta. Every day my suffering is 60,000 iron hammers are falling on my head and breaking it into pieces.” The Ven. asked him; “Of the three actions, physical, verbal and mental which action did you commit?” Then the peta described his evil deed. “Ven. Sir, in one of my past lives as a man, I saw the Pacceka-buddha Sunetta. He was in meditation under a tree near the bank of the Ganges River. At that time, I have just learned my skill of throwing pebbles. For testing my skill, I threw a pebble on his head and it broke his head and died on the spot. (The stone pebble went into the right ear and came out from the left ear. People saw this became very angry and beat him to death.) Because of this evil deed, now the iron hammers are pounding on my head.” (DhA. ii. 71F; Pv. iv. 16; PvA. 283f)

The Pacceka-buddha Sunetta was mentioned in the Peta Vatthu two times. Another time was he met a young prince who was conceited and with anger broke his alms bowl (Pv. iii. 2; iv. 7; PvA. 177f., 264). The prince after died and born in hell. After released from hell and born as a peta, and then at last born into a fishing village as a man. From this last life as a human being, he became the arahant Ven. Sāṇavāsī [Sānuvāsī (sī.), Sānavāsī (syā.)]. All these peta stories taught us to see the burdened khandha and its dukkha.

This miserable story was warning human beings how to use their many worldly knowledge properly and wisely. Not all worldly knowledge are good to learn. Especially the knowledge of politics, science and economics are very important and should use them properly and wisely. It can bring peace, happiness and progress to

the human race. Also, it can lead to the destruction of the human race. We can see this in today world. Even temperature is rising to the destructive level, the leader of super power, out of selfishness and greedy he neglected of the agreement his country had already signed with others to tackle the climate problem.

Whatever someone's motives are if he did evil deeds himself or asks others to do it, all of them have to bear the results of actions. For example, a world leader orders to drop a hydrogen bomb on a city. The results of the evil deed not only the pilot who drops the bomb but also the leader and the scientists who create this matter to happens have to bear the evil results.

For the Buddha, the unsurpassed training—sikkhānuttariya was in morality, concentration and discernment—sīla, samādhi and paññā. It is called supreme training—adhi-sikkhā. Why is that? Because it gives rise to vision, to knowledge, leads to peace, to direct knowledge (i.e., insight), to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. But all worldly knowledge and trainings for craving and indulgence in sensual pleasures lead to sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and the whole mass of sufferings. So, the Buddha said that the best and supreme knowledge and training were sīla, samādhi and paññā.

(5) The unsurpassed service—pāricariyānuttariya

There are many ways of supporting with materials to people. Some are doing as a duty and some as a profession. The types of people we need to support or helping are the Buddha and the saṅgha, parents, family members, relatives, elderly people, sick people (patients), etc. As a profession, we can make money as a livelihood, e.g., doctors, nurses. For the Buddha, the best supporting was to the Buddha and the saṅgha. Why is that? Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha are the best treasures, refuges and blessings and very rare indeed.

Only a Buddha arises living beings can see the Buddha and Saṅgha and have the chance to know the Dhamma. How difficult to has the chance for a Buddha to arise it can be imagined? Our bodhisatta (i.e., Buddha Gautama) started his perfections (pāramīs) during the Buddha Dīpaṅkara's time. After the Buddha Dīpaṅkara and Buddha Kondañña arose.

The period between them was one incalculable aeon (asaṅkheyya-kappa). After Buddha Kondañña and Buddha Maṅgala arose. Between them was one incalculable aeon and no other Buddhas. From Buddha Maṅgala to Buddha Anomadassī was one incalculable aeon, between them with three Buddhas. Buddha Gautama developed his perfections for four incalculable and 100,000 aeons.

During three incalculable aeons only six Buddhas arose. Today Buddhists of the world should contemplate this point seriously and not wasting our times and chances for the momentary, fleeting pleasure. Supporting for others are wholesome actions and merits. But their qualities are different. So, their results are also. By supporting the Buddha and Saṅgha people could close to them, and learn the Dhamma, by following it, they lived a fruitful life and even could transcend dukkha. It was not only good at the beginning (present life) but also good for the next life and saṃsāra. With the help of the Buddha, Saṅgha and the Dhamma people developed wisdom.

All the worldly problems and mental sufferings came from not supporting the Buddha and Saṅgha that we did not have the chances to meet them and learn the Dhamma. So, we had wrong teachings and wrong views and based on them by doing a lot of unwholesome actions with mind, speech and body. In the world, what is more, important than quenching of dukkha? This can be possible only with the help of Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha and your inner power and not by God and supernatural beings.

(6) The unsurpassed recollection—anussatānuttariya

There are many things and matters human beings recollect and remember them. Here the Buddha mentioned some of them; someone recollects the gain of a son, a wife or wealth, or various kinds of gain. Because many objects are connecting with the six sense-doors, some living beings, material objects and mental objects. Most of them can be ignoble, lowly and not lead to peace and happiness. These things do not bring benefits to humans if they are recollecting or remembering them with craving, greed, hatred, ill-will, etc.

There are many examples to give, as, e.g. on sensual pleasures and objects; on someone whom one hates; someone has died whom one attached to, etc. We should not use our memory and recollection blindly and without control. If very often, it will become a habit and character. Surely unwholesome dhammas never bring happiness and peace. Near death is very important in one life. Dying moment determines one's future rebirth.

With a bad memory leads to painful rebirth. With bad recollections defile our mind and increase our defilement. The untrained mind is out of control and running to the past and future things and matters. And then we do not know what the mind is thinking. So, we are carrying away by them. We need sati—mindfulness and proper attention. With sati and proper attention, we can develop wisdom.

The things and matters themselves are neither bad nor good. It depends on the mind reaction. But still, we need to practice sense restraints. Because most human beings latent with a thickness of defilement. Kilesa is like a tiger hidden in a bush and waiting for the preys. Without restraint, it will kill us at any time.

The Buddha taught us the best recollections were the following ten recollections—dasa anussatiyo. These are:

[1] Recollection of the Buddha:

This is one thing that—when developed and pursued—leads solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge to self-awakening, to Nibbāna.

[2] Recollection of the Dhamma:

This is one thing that—when developed and pursued—leads solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge to self-awakening, to Nibbāna.

[3] Recollection of the Saṅgha:

This is one thing that—when developed and pursued—leads solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge to self-awakening, to Nibbāna.

[4] Recollection of the virtue:

This is one thing that—when developed and pursued—leads solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge to self-awakening, to Nibbāna.

[5] Recollection of generosity:

This is one thing that—when developed and pursued—leads solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge to self-awakening, to Nibbāna.

[6] Recollection of the devas:

This is one thing that—when developed and pursued—leads solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge to self-awakening, to Nibbāna.

[7] Mindfulness of in and out breathing:

This is one thing that—when developed and pursued—leads solely to

disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge to self-awakening, to Nibbāna.

[8] Mindfulness of death:

This is one thing that—when developed and pursued—leads solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge to self-awakening, to Nibbāna.

[9] Mindfulness immersed in the body:

This is one thing that—when developed and pursued—leads solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge to self-awakening, to Nibbāna.

[10] Recollection of stilling:

This is one thing that—when developed and pursued—leads solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge to self-awakening, to Nibbāna.

The ten recollections a set of meditation themes that highlight the positive role, memory and thought play in training the mind. Only seven of them are recollections (anussati). These are; no. [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6] and [10]. The other three are mindfulness practices (sati). The Pāli words for mindfulness and recollection are intimately related. (For details on these ten recollections refer to Ajahn Thanissaro Bhikkhu—“A Meditators’ Tools”). All these ten recollections; when developed and pursued, lead solely to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening and Nibbāna that the best recollections or noble recollections.

Therefore, Buddhists should know the best or noble things and matters to choose and follow them. These are the lessons in our life. The Buddha laid down the standards to distinguish ignoble or noble, low or high, bad or good, not benefit or benefit, etc. These were mentioned in the First Discourse of the Buddha—Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma.

The negative things and matters; which are low, vulgar, the ways of worldlings, ignoble, unbeneficial and painful. The positive things and matters; which give rise to vision, to knowledge, lead to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment and Nibbāna. For us, the most important standards are things and matters bring benefits, peace and happiness.

Nowadays, because of material developments or progress, there are many things and matters; some are good and some are bad. With self and money centeredness—that there are more bad than good. Therefore, we should know the Buddha-Dhamma and doing things rightly and wisely. So, seeing contemplatives is an important part of Buddhist life.

Therefore, the Buddha taught that this was the highest protection and blessing in life. At least the benefit of contact with *samaṇas* as we can distinguish unwholesome and wholesome dhammas. Nowadays, even most leaders and politicians do not have this quality. Therefore, there is a lot of turmoil going on in some countries.

29. Discussing the Dhamma on Timely Occasions

Practicing of meditation can be started from the 25th blessing of hearing the Dhamma on timely occasions. One of the factors for the realization of Dhamma is listening to Dhamma. Here the blessing is discussing the Dhamma, which has some differences from hearing Dhamma.

But they are closely related. Without hearing Dhamma, we do not know practice and discuss Dhamma with others. Here both sides discuss what they know and do not know yet. In this way, we can part or share knowledge.

It can increase one's knowledge and progress in practice. Why practicing meditation can be said, start from listening Dhamma on timely occasions? According to the Buddha, Dhammasavaṇa—listening of Dhamma had five factors:

- (1) Listening with attention
- (2) Taking notes or remembering them
- (3) Reflecting on them
- (4) Understanding of them
- (5) After understanding of them and put it into practice, i.e., sīla, samādhi and paññā.

Discussing of Dhamma also has the five benefits. These are:

- (1) Hearing things never heard before
- (2) Have clear knowledge
- (3) Overcoming doubts
- (4) Have right views
- (5) One's mind grows serene.

There is no doubt that discussion or dialogue on Dhamma has great benefits. There were many evidences and stories in the suttas. Even non-Buddhists, i.e., outsiders had great benefits and their lives were changed. Before they had wrong views and after dialogue had the right views and knew how to live their lives. Some even became monks and realized the Dhamma.

Dialogue between faiths is also very important. Especially nowadays this is more urgently need. The main goal of all faiths is peace, harmony and happiness. The basic foundation is nearly the same, i.e., morality; to become a good human being. Because of misunderstanding and misinterpretation, one's own and other faiths create

problems and mistrust. There is also conceit—the superior syndrome. Because of this defilement, some people worship the same God, killing and harming other faiths.

Today human morality is going down very quickly like a thermometer. Dialogue between faiths can help to solve the problem of moral degeneration. We can learn from each other and helping each other to solve social problems. In this respect, Buddha-Dhamma can offer a lot. Dialogue between world leaders, politicians, are also very important for their countries stability and the world.

Out of greed and selfishness, some leaders and politicians only make their countries great and not a concern for others. They have ill-will and capitalist syndrome of growth, profits and competition. Greedy, ill-will, envy, avarice, exploitation, etc. will never bring harmony, peace and happiness to one's own country and the world. Look at today world situations and we know the outcomes and conditions of unwholesome dhamma. A human cannot solve the worldly problems with confrontation and competition. Because greed, ill-will, delusion are the root of all suffering.

Why should politicians and economists destroy themselves and the world just for sensual pleasures? The price for sensual pleasure is far greater than a momentary, fleeting pleasure. They all have to pay for their evil deeds in hell, as animals and ghosts. These are inexpressible sufferings just for sensual pleasures.

Dhamma discussion and dialogue are mostly practicing by elderly Buddhists. It has a long tradition by Burmese Buddhists who have some Abhidhamma knowledge. They are arguing on some Abhidhamma Doctrines. Tha-pye-kan Sayadaw said that youth and young people also should practice it. He said we should arrange Dhamma discussion for them. We can say this is a kind of Dhamma education. It was like the Chinese culture and moral standards. Some Chinese Dynasties followed them were creating prosperity and lasting longer. All the worldly problems and sufferings can be related to not knowing of the Buddha-Dhamma and not practicing it.

There was no-one understanding and penetrating the human mind and its nature better than or more complete than the Buddha. The suttas were testified this point. For 45 years he was wandering and staying on the earth to teach every kind and type of human beings.

Sometimes heavenly beings came down to ask him questions to clear about their doubts. Arrange Dhamma discussing among the youth can have great benefits for them. With the knowledge of Dhamma, which represents intelligence and wisdom, they will know what is right and wrong, beneficial and not beneficial, proper and not proper, etc.

They can also have the power of how to deal and solve the problems and difficulties in their life. Dhamma discussing is one of the causes of progress in wisdom. We can see this important point in some suttas. In Dhamma, dialogue and discussing should not make arguments and criticisms. Instead, it should be exchanged with knowledge and learned from each other.

Regarding listen to Dhamma talks, there are some differences. In listening to Dhamma, some of them are we already know. It is also we cannot know more than in the talks if we have doubts and cannot solve the problems. Therefore, it is very important to have questions and answers sections after the talks. This practice is quite common in the west, but in Burma does not has this kind of tradition. So, Burmese teachers should allow Dhamma listeners, to enrich their knowledge and solve their doubts. Here I want to present the benefit of Dhamma discussion or dialogue from a sutta.

Discourse on Khemaka: Khemaka Sutta.

Several older monks were dwelling at Kosambī in Ghosita's Park. Now on that occasion, Ven. Khemaka was living at Jujube Tree Park, sick and gravely ill. He was at that time an anāgāmi (had the third stage of enlightenment). In an evening these monks emerged from their practice and asked Ven. Dāsaka (may be the youngest monk) to visit Ven. Khemaka and asked him about his illness. Ven. Khemaka told Ven. Dāsaka that his illness was not better and strong painful feeling (vedanā) increased. And then, Ven. Dāsaka returned and reported the news to the older monks.

The older monks for the second time sent back Ven. Dāsaka to asked Ven. Khemaka again. There were the five aggregates (khandhas), i.e., form, feeling, perception, volitional formation and consciousness. These were subjected to clinging. They wanted to ask Ven. Khemaka was, did he regard anything as self or as belonging to self among these five aggregates subject to clinging.

Ven. Khemaka's answer was, he did not regard anything as self or as belonging to self among these five aggregates. And then, Ven. Dāsaka returned and reported the answer.

The older monks for the third time sent back Ven. Dāsaka to ask Ven. Khemaka again. If he was not clinging to any of the five aggregates as self or belonging to self, then he was an arahant, one whose taints (āsavas) were destroyed.

Ven. Khemaka answered that even though he did not take any of the five aggregates as self or belonging to self, he was not an arahant yet, one whose taints were destroyed. But the notion of “I am” had not yet vanished in him about the five aggregates. And he did not regard anything among them as “This I am.” (According to Mogok Sayadawgyi, Ven. Khemaka was only an anāgāmi; he did not take each of the aggregates as self or belonging to self. But he had not yet eradicated ignorance—avijjā which sustained a residual conceit and desire “I am” about the five aggregates.) And then, Ven. Dāsaka returned and reported the answer.

The older monks, after they heard the answer, still not clear what Ven. Khemaka had said before. So, they sent back Ven. Dāsaka to ask for the fourth time; did he speak of form—rūpakkhanda as “I am” or apart from form, as “I am”. The other aggregates also in the same manner. Therefore, Ven. Dāsaka returned and asked the question. Then, Ven. Khemaka was leaning on his staff and with Ven. Dāsaka went to see the elders.

He explained to the elders that he did not take form as “I am” or apart from the form as “I am”. The other aggregates also in the same way. But he still held the whole five aggregates as “I am”, instead of each of them as “I am”. He gave a simile for this point. There were the scents of blue, red and white lotus. Did the scents belong to petals, or the stalks or the pistils? The right answer was the scent belonged to the flower. In the same way, he did not take any of the five khandhas as “I am”, but to the whole five aggregates as “I am”.

He continued to explain to them. Even though a noble disciple had abandoned the five lower fetters (i.e., anāgāmin, fetters are called saṃyojana. There are ten fetters:

- (1) identity view,
- (2) doubt,
- (3) the distorted grasp of rules and vows,
- (4) sensual desire,
- (5) ill-will,
- (6) lust for form,
- (7) lust for formless,
- (8) conceit,
- (9) restlessness,
- (10) ignorance.

As an anāgāmi, Ven. Khemaka had eradicated the first five fetters. But he still had relation to the five aggregates subjected to clinging. It lingered in him as a residual

conceit “I am”, a desire “I am”, an underlying tendency “I am” that had not yet been uprooted. So, the yogi had dwelt to contemplate the rise and fall in the five aggregates subjected to clinging and the residual conceit and the underlying tendency “I am”, came to be uprooted.

Ven. Khemaka explained it with a simile. A cloth had become soiled and stained. And gave it to a laundryman. He would scour it evenly with cleaning salt, lye, or cow dung. And then rinsed it in clean water. Even though the cloth became pure and clean, still had the residual smell of cleaning salt, lye, or cow dung.

So, had to put it in a sweet-scented casket and all the residual smell of salt, lye or cow dung had vanished. In the end, Ven. Khemaka and all the 60 monks became arahants. Because at the same time of Discussing Dhamma, they contemplated their khandhas.

Some points were interesting to contemplate. According to Mogok Sayadawgyi; the first time Ven. Dāsaka went to see Ven. Khemaka, all of the elders were worldlings. After the second time, they were once-returners (sakadāgāmins), because each time they got the answers from Ven. Khemaka and practiced accordingly.

After the third time, they did not make very clear about Ven. Khemaka’s answer. Therefore, in the fourth time, he went to them and explained Dhamma. In the end, all of them finished the practice.

In his commentary on the Maṅgala Sutta, Tha-pye-gan Sayadaw gave the Mahāgosiṅga Sutta—The Great Gosinga Wood Discourse for the Dhamma Discussing. (from Majjhima Nikāya, MN.32 Mahāgosiṅgasuttaṃ).

Mahāgosiṅga Sutta

At one time, the Buddha and some of his chief and great disciples stayed in the Gosinga Sal Wood. Then in an evening, Ven Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākassapa, Anuruddha, Revata and Ānanda went together to Ven. Sāriputta for his talk. After they arrived there instead of giving his Dhamma talk, first he asked Ven. Ānanda the following question.

The Gosinga forest was beautiful and peaceful at night. The sal trees were in full blooms. The fragrant scent of the flowers diffused in the night. The question was what kind of monk could grace the Gosinga forest. Each of the monks following gave or offered their views accordingly to their outstanding or foremost qualities.

Ven. Ānanda's Answer:

In this matter, a monk who had heard a great them fluently reflected on them and penetratingly comprehended them with wisdom. That monk taught people (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen) for the uprooting of latent defilement (kilesa). Such a monk could grace the Gosinga Sal Wood.

Ven. Revata's Answer (Sāriputta's youngest brother):

In this matter, a monk who delighted in solitary seclusion enjoyed seclusion, constantly strived for tranquility, endowed with insight and devoted to practice in secluded places. Such a monk could grace the Gosinga Sal forest.

Ven. Anuruddha's Answer:

In this matter, a monk who could survey a thousand world systems celestial or divine eye which was extremely clear, far more surpassed than the telescopes of the scientists. Such a monk could grace the Gosinga Sal forest.

Ven. Mahākassapa's Answer:

He was older than the Buddha in age. Because of his background before ordained and austere practices in the holy life, the Buddha took him very highly and praised him a lot. He was the only monk who the Buddha exchanged robes with him. After the Buddha passed away, he preserved his Dhamma for original and pure from the contamination.

Today Buddhists owed him a lot for his effort. In this matter, a monk who practiced the austerity of forest-dwelling and praised the virtues of it. Taking only food received on the alms round and praised the virtues of it. Wearing discarded pieces of cloth and praised the virtues of it. Keeping only three robes for wear and praised the virtues of it. Who was of few desire and praised the virtues of having only few desire.

Who was contented and praised the virtues of contentment? Who sought seclusion, stayed aloof from people, strived energetically in practice, completely endowed with morality, concentration and wisdom, attained liberation and endowed with the reflective knowledge of that liberation. Such a monk could grace the Gosinga Sal wood.

Ven. Mahāmoggallāna's Answer:

In this matter, two monks were discussing the higher Dhamma. Each asked the other question and each answered questions put by the other without difficulty, e.g., Dhamma Discussions between Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahākoṭṭhita. Such a monk

could grace the Gosinga Sal forest. After he had given his answer and Ven. Mahāmogallāna asked Ven. Sāriputta of his view on this matter.

Ven. Sāriputta's Answer:

In this case, a monk who had mastery over his mind that whatever attainment (there are two attainments; i.e., absorptions—jhānas and fruition states—phalas) he wished to enter for at any time and he could do it quite easily. Such a monk could grace the Gosinga Sal wood. All of them had different answers, but the Taste of Dhamma was only one.

They answered them from their characters and preferences. They wanted to know how the Buddha responded to them. So, they went to see The Blessed One. The Buddha said that all of them answered properly and praised them. All answers were well spoken and justified. And then, the Buddha gave his view on this matter.

The Buddha's Answer:

In this case, the monk returned from the round of alms-food and had finished his alms-meal. And then, sat down with crossed legs to practice mindfulness in meditation, satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā with the determination that he would not get up from sitting until his mind was freed from the clinging of defilement—kilesa. This monk could grace the Gosinga Sal forest.

All these kinds of monks mentioned in this sutta still exist into this day. Thanks to the monks who preserved the Dhamma and practices and supported by the laity in Buddhist countries such as Burma and Thailand. Burma continues to produce monks like Ven. Ānanda who can recite the Tipiṭaka by heart. Thai forest tradition still produce monks like Ven. Mahākassapa.

Burma continues to produce excellent scholars, monks and meditation teachers. So, monks and laity alike can learn the Dhamma and practices, and with many meditations, centers continue to arise. These meditation centers give the chances for anyone who wants to practice to end dukkha in this life, which the Buddha emphasized in his answer.

Even we can say all the human problems and sufferings come from not knowing the Dhamma and not practicing it. So, for every human being nothing is more important than study and practice the Dhamma. Listening and discussing of Dhamma on timely occasions are pre-requisites for it. So, the Buddha said that discussing the Dhamma on timely occasions was the highest protection with a blessing.

30. Austerity / 31. celibacy

The commentary explained austerity (tapa) as restraint of the sense faculties. Tapa is a concept of the Indian religion—such as extreme meditation, mortification of the physical body, austere practices, penance, on. In the First Discourse of the Buddha (Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta) —he (the Buddha) rejected the meaning of tapa as mortification of the body which was extreme. Therefore, the Buddha used it as (the same word) wholesome energy (virīya) which burns up unwholesome qualities. In the Buddha sense tapa is burning up the feeling of unhappiness and disappointment, and strong wanting. Someone possesses this quality is called an ardent person or yogi. It is a blessing because it can lead to absorption (jhānas) and other attainments by abandoning all the obstacles.

The commentary explained celibacy or spiritual life (brahmacariya) as abstaining from all sexual activity, the duty of a spiritual person, the Buddha-Dhamma (the teaching), practice or the path (Noble Eightfold Path). It is a blessing because this is the cause for the successive achievements or attainments in the spiritual life.

The Pāli word tapo or tapa means to extinguish defilement by striving hard. Here translated as austerity. Brahmacariya is celibacy or life of celibacy or holy life. The meanings of tapa and brahmacariya are not much different. According to Thāpye-gan Sayadaw, here austerity had to take sīla and celibacy as samatha-vipassanā (concentration-insight) practices.

In Pāli text, tapa was commenting in many ways; a name for restraint, the ascetic practices (dhutaṅga), energy, patience (khanti), brahmacariya, etc. So, here to take both austerity and celibacy as sīla, samādhi and paññā practices or the Noble Eightfold Path. In this Maṅgala Sutta, patience (khanti) is also tapa. The holy life (brahmacariya) is the practices of a monk with celibacy and other holy practices.

In life when an encounter with dangers and sufferings tapa and brahmacariya or sīla, samādhi and paññā are true refuges. Other things and matters are not true refuges, for examples during sickness and dying. In the Sagāthāvagga, Devaputtasamyutta, Subrahmā Discourse; the Buddha said to the young deva (deity) Subrahmā as follow. (SN. 2.17 Subrahmasuttaṃ)

Not apart from enlightenment (bojjhaṅgas), austerity (tapa), restraint of the sense faculties (indriya saṁvara) and relinquishing all (sabbanissagga), the Buddha could not see any security for all living beings. Why did the Buddha say these Dhamma to

him? There were interesting dhammas we can learn from this discourse.

The stress of the young deity

Once the young deity Subrahmā and his thousand celestial nymphs went to a flower garden for amusements. Five hundred nymphs went up to the tree; they plucked the flowers and threw it down for the other nymphs under the tree. They made wreaths of flower and others. Even they may be in singing and dancing with the music. After sometimes passed by the voices on the trees became silent.

Because the nymphs on the tree suddenly expired and they were immediately reborn in the Avīci hell. As soon as Subrahmā realized it, he checked with his divine eyes and saw all of them suffering in hell. Therefore, he examined his lifespan and knew that he and the other nymphs would die after seven days. They would encounter the same fate in hell.

The young deva was in utter fear and came to the Buddha for help. So, the Buddha taught him the Dhamma. Perhaps he had acquired a compelling sense of urgency (saṁvega) during the discourse and established in the fruit of stream-entry.

The Buddha taught five natural laws or fixed orders (niyāma). These were;

- (1) utu niyāma—fixed order of temperature
- (2) bīja niyāma—fixed order of genetics
- (3) kamma niyāma—fixed order of actions
- (4) citta niyāma—fixed order of the mind
- (5) dhamma niyāma—fixed order of phenomena.

Exception on kamma niyāma, scientists and psychologists know more or less of the others. Kamma starts the beginning of being life. It decides the inferior and superior, low and high status of a being. It leads or decides a being to degenerate and progress. It creates suffering and happiness of a being, etc. We can find all these important and valuable teachings only in the Buddha Dhamma. The Buddha divided the kamma in four ways with their functions.

- (1) Reproductive kamma
- (2) Supportive kamma
- (3) Habitual kamma
- (4) Destructive kamma.

Here we have to understand destructive kamma (upaghātaka kamma) in two ways; positive and negative. For example, a powerful wholesome kamma destroys the unwholesome kamma. Aṅgulimāla—the garland of fingers bandit had killed a lot of people; when he became an arahant, this heavy wholesome kamma destroyed all the results of unwholesome kamma he had done before. For the destructive negative kamma, we can give the example of Devadatta—the Buddha’s cousin.

He had jhāna and psychic power. Later he had ill-will and persuaded the young prince to kill his father King Bimbisāra, and then he tried to murder the Buddha and split the saṅgha. So, he lost all his spiritual power and at last fell into Mahā-avīci hell.

Here the 500 nymphs fell into hell was could be had a connection with their past destructive kamma. The law and working of kamma was one of the four inconceivable phenomena. One of the great disadvantages of heavenly realms are the beings there do not have the chances to cultivate goodness or wholesome merits. They only enjoy the wholesome results of their past kammās.

Therefore, the deities or heavenly beings understand the results or benefits of wholesome kamma more than human beings. Because human beings cannot see the results directly like deities, other important factors are human beings not only rely on their past kammās but also the present life of their abilities such as right effort and intelligence or wisdom.

Right effort and intelligence are more evident than their past kammās for most human beings. Only people who understand the Buddha Dhamma very well no doubt about the importance of the results of past kamma. I had heard a dhamma talk by a Burmese monk on the three creators or Gods. He referred them to kamma, effort and knowledge which represented the three creators.

But most human beings rely on or take refuge in outside powers who or which they have never seen before. Just believe in the words of the prophets or by other mediums. In the Dīgha Nikāya, the first discourse mentioned there was; The Nets of Views Discourse. In there, the Buddha mentioned 62 kinds of wrong views of his time and most of the wrong views were a connection with samatha practices.

On the five khandhas, the Buddha said that consciousness (viññāṇa) was like a magician. Except for the Buddha and arahants, all living beings have all the inversions (vipallāsa) or some of them. The power is not come from outside but within ourselves. Everyone has the potentiality to transcend things.

The 500 nymphs fell into hell by using up all their good past kamma with sensual

pleasure in heaven all the time. They did not have the chances to cultivate goodness. So, their destructive kamma had the chances to come in so easily. Here another important point to contemplate about was the utter fear of the young deva went to see the Buddha for help.

Why was he so frightened and distressed? Because he had seen the sufferings of hell and after seven days, he would be there. Some human beings seem very good now, but in their past lives, maybe not. Therefore, all living beings must pay back their kammic debts in some ways when times are ripe. In saṃsāra living beings are the slaves of kilesa—defilement. They are doing everything with body, speech and mind for the masters. So, we all have these kammic debts to pay for.

There are two ways we can pay back our kammic debts; with the khandhas (i.e., body and mind) and the Noble Eightfold Path Factors (i.e., magga or Path Knowledge). By paying back the debts with the khandhas and it will never end. Because we all will continue to create kammās in the rounds of existence. Therefore, we all are still in saṃsāra. The best and secure ways to pay the kammic debts is the Path Knowledge or the path factors, which now Subrahma deva was looking for it.

Dukkha is our great teacher. Because of dukkha sacca the young deva had acquired a compelling sense of great urgency (strong saṃvega) that he met the Buddha for help. It is quite natural for living beings when they are suffered looking for true refuge and help. But how many people have the right search, or know the right ways. Because of their very deep and thick ignorance that beings in saṃsāra were never found the true refuge.

Even nowadays, the Buddha Dhamma is still existing and how many of the world population have it. Only the Buddha appeared in the world beings had the chances for it. Even though still, not many beings had the opportunity to know the Dhamma. The Buddha told him was very clear that he could not help him directly, not falling into hell. Buddha only showed the way to transcend distress.

Every being has the inner power to transcend it if he follows by the Dhamma. Therefore, the Buddha taught him; not apart from enlightenment (bojjhaṅgas), austerity (tapa), restraint of the sense faculties (Indriya saṃvara) and relinquishing all (sabbanissagga) that could prevent him falling into hell.

This teaching represented the three training; sīla, samādhi, and paññā. Except that the Buddha could not see any security for all living beings. Therefore, the Buddha said that austerity and celibacy were the highest blessing and protection.

On the Internet:

<http://myweb.ncku.edu.tw/~lsn46/a-path-to-freedom/ven-uttamo/protection-with-blessings/content-of-protection-with-blessings/>

(last revised on 2020-07-11)

<http://nanda.online-dhamma.net/a-path-to-freedom/ven-uttamo/protection-with-blessings/content-of-protection-with-blessings/>

(last revised on 2020-07-11)

Download this document for print:

in general font (12 pt):

<https://github.com/twnanda/doc-pdf-etc/blob/master/pdf/protection-with-blessings-full-text-12pt-print.pdf>

in Large font (14.5 pt):

<https://github.com/twnanda/doc-pdf-etc/blob/master/pdf/protection-with-blessings-full-text-14pt-print.pdf>

by Ven. Uttamo Thera (尊者 鄔達摩 長老)

TAIWAN

B. E. 2563
(July 2020 C. E.)

According to the translator—Ven. Uttamo's words, this is strictly for free distribution only, as a gift of Dhamma—Dhamma Dāna. You may re-format, reprint, translate, and redistribute this work in any medium.