

# Buddha, My Refuge



Contemplation of the Buddha  
Bhikkhu Khantipalo

## BUDDHA, MY REFUGE

### Contemplation of the Buddha based on the Pali Suttas

Although Theravada Buddhism is sometimes depicted as a dry rationalistic system, the living Theravada tradition exhibits a warm current of devotion focused on the sublime figure of the Buddha, the All-Enlightened One. In the Pali Canon the Buddha's excellent qualities are extolled in a classic formula of nine terms which serves as the basis for both Buddhist devotion and the meditative recollection of the Buddha. In the present book the author has used this formula as a key for collecting a rich variety of texts from the Pali Canon illustrating each of the Buddha's nine outstanding virtues. The result is a beautiful and inspiring anthology of suttas on the personality of the Blessed One, introduced and explained in such a way as to highlight their practical relevance.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo is the author of numerous books on Buddhism, among them *Calm and Insight* (Curzons) and *Banner of the Arahants* (BPS).

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BASED ON THE PALI SUTTAS

BHIKKHU KHANTIPĀLO

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## PREFACE

This small work has its origins in the composition during one Rains in a Thai monastery, of a life of the Buddha. This work—later printed by Mahāmakut Press, Bangkok, in two volumes and entitled *The Splendour of Enlightenment*—is made up of quotations from the Pali Suttas and other sources without any explanations or commentary. One of the chapters (XII) is called “Recollection of the Buddha” and illustrates the nine virtues of the Buddha with sutta passages and stories. Other chapters are on “The Samaṇa Gotama”, that is, the Buddha as seen by others; and “The Tathāgata”, the Buddha talking about himself as an enlightened teacher.

I had proposed to Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera that the Recollection chapter be reprinted in *The Wheel* series but he had pointed out a number of changes which would make for improvement. The matter stood for a while and was then taken up again by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, who was so kind as to map out some quotations to illustrate the nine virtues. Though I have not adhered to his ideas completely, many of the passages that he proposed have been included in the present work. I have added a commentary which should join all these pieces together, offering explanation and perhaps a little inspiration. Most of the passages included are from the Pali Suttas, with only one or two from the Commentaries. The majority of them have come from *The Splendour of Enlightenment*, as can be seen from the list of references. The concluding extract, translated from the Sinhalese, is a quotation from *Butsarana*, in *An Anthology of Sinhalese Literature*, published by Allen and Unwin, London (1970).

As passages have been selected from various sources, some discrepancies will be seen in the rendering of Pali terms, reflecting the choices of the individual translators; in an inspirational work of this kind, however, this failing is perhaps not important. In some places adopted translations have been slightly modified.

To all the good supporters of Wat Buddha-Dhamma—in particular to Riet and Neville Little, in whose *kuṭi* I stayed while finishing this work, and to Mallika Perera, a patient typist—I dedicate the merits in composing this book.

*Bhikkhu Khantipālo*

Wat Buddha-Dhamma  
New South Wales  
Australia

*Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato  
Sammā Sambuddhassa*

We wish to revere with mind, speech and body  
that Lord apportioning Dhamma,  
that One far from defilements,  
that One perfectly enlightened by himself.

*Yo sannisinno varabodhimūle  
Māraṃ sasenaṃ sujitaṃ jinitvā  
Sambodhim āgacchi anantañāṇo  
Lokuttamo taṃ paṇamāmi buddhaṃ.*

Seated serene at the Sacred Bodhi's root,  
Having conquered Māra and his host,  
Attained to perfect enlightenment with wisdom  
that is infinite,  
Highest in the universe, that Buddha I revere.

## INTRODUCTION

Though in every Buddhist country there are devotional and inspirational works based on the life of the Buddha, few if any are available in English. This is a pity because the impression given of Pali Buddhism in lands where it is not established can easily be that of a dry scholastic system. But this might lead the intelligent reader to reflect that Buddhism has flourished as a popular religion in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka and Thailand for hundreds or thousands of years, and that it could not do so on a diet of dust. In these lands themselves the devotional side of Buddhism is immediately evident, centred around such focuses for faith as Bodhi trees, stupas, and Buddha images. People not only visit temples to make offerings and chant but sometimes stay there for whole days or even longer. Not all Buddhists, not even all faithful Buddhists, are meditators, so what do they do with their time? Some have rosaries which are used in conjunction with chanting, some chant extensive passages learnt by heart, while others sit and read, very often such a book as this.

So here is a book to take up at quiet times for reflection, whether you have the opportunity of sitting in the quiet grounds of a whitewashed temple on an Uposatha day, the scent from the frangipani trees like an offering of incense to the Buddha, or whether it is in your office during a quiet spell, or at home where you may have a shrine and meditation room. Spend some time carefully and slowly reading these texts, and then rereading them. Reflect on them, particularly any text that inspires you. Such pieces should be learnt by heart and, if you incline to devotional practice, chanted as well. While it has been the tradition in the southern Buddhist lands to chant mostly in Pali, use of the native language is

increasing. Thus Burmese and Cambodians often chant in their own tongues while Thais alternate Pali with its Thai equivalents. Recognising the need for understandable chants in countries where Buddhism has only a toehold, on coming to Australia and after helping to establish Wat Buddha-Dhamma, the author determined to begin chanting in Pali and English, and sometimes only in English. The latter is especially easy with verse translations, of which there are several included here, some in use at Wat Buddha-Dhamma.

Such reading, reflection, and chanting are all parts of a practice called *Buddhānussati*, the Recollection of the Buddha. These various aspects of this recollection lead to meditation on the nine Buddha-virtues. This can be a discursive practice, each virtue being recollected by thinking of some teaching or event that illustrates it; or it can be more abbreviated and devotional with a passage chanted for each Buddha-virtue; or it may be even more concentrated with a rosary used to count off the Buddha-virtues one by one.

This kind of practice is very valuable in overcoming sceptical doubt or uncertainty (*vicikicchā*), a hindrance to meditation common among those who take a narrowly intellectual approach to the Dhamma. These people really need to bring the Buddha into their hearts. Having the Buddha in the head is not only uncomfortable, it is uncomfoting, for just when the consolation of Dhamma is needed the Buddha is forgotten. The Buddha only journeys from head to heart through practice of Dhamma, by gaining faith in the Buddha. When one has gone for refuge to the Buddha by regular Dhamma practice, the Buddha enters one's heart, and one can then really face all the world's sorrows feeling, "Buddha, My Refuge."

The Buddha-virtues are commonly repeated in the suttas, often in passages where the Buddha speaks about himself or

describes the nature of a faithful follower. These virtues seem, by reason of their unsystematic form, to go back to the time of oral tradition in the Buddha's days. Later lists of the Buddha's epithets are often more systematically arranged to illustrate the Buddha's great compassion, purity, and wisdom. These three qualities may be seen in the often repeated *Namo tassa Bhagavato* (compassion), *Arahato* (purity), *Sammā Sambuddhassa* (wisdom). The nine virtues to follow in fact expand upon and clarify these three.

***Arahāṃ: The Accomplished Destroyer of Defilements***

This virtue shows *stainless purity*, true worth, and the accomplishment of the end, Nibbāna. The Buddha is first named as an Arahāt, as were his enlightened followers, since he is free from all defilements, without greed, hatred, and delusion, rid of ignorance and craving, having no "assets" that will lead to a future birth, knowing and seeing the real here and now.

***Sammā Sambuddho: A Buddha Perfected by Himself***

This emphasises the majesty of one who has awakened by *wisdom* to the truth found in his own heart and by his own labours. He owes his Enlightenment to none; it is not the work of a god granting it to him, nor is he an enlightened messenger from on high, nor again an incarnation of some god. Born as a human being, he has gone beyond the limitations of humanity, and he declares that what he has done others too may do. They are not found frequently, these Fully Awakened Ones, and only when the heart of Dhamma is no longer known will one of them appear and awaken to Enlightenment after lives of preparation as a Bodhisatta.

*Vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno: Complete in Clear Knowledge and Compassionate Conduct*

Both wisdom and compassion have a part in this virtue, where balanced and developed to their highest degree they show the nature of a Buddha. Wisdom sees non-self, voidness, emptiness; compassion sees suffering beings blinded by ignorance and craving. Out of this seeming contradiction the very fruitful life of a Buddha is born.

*Sugato: Supremely Good in Presence and in Destiny*

“His going was good” both in his life and at its end when he reached final Nibbāna. His going forth in the world was out of *compassion* for people in their need for help, in sickness, due to defilements, or sometimes because of social oppression and injustice. The final going might be described as *compassionate*, showing as it did the way to others, or as *wise*, illustrating the way out of all conflict.

*Lokavidū: Knower of the Worlds*

This is a *wisdom* characteristic, the knowing through meditation and insight of the nature of all the various worlds.

*Anuttaro Purisadamma-sārathī: Incomparable Master of Those to be Tamed*

This virtue again is a balance of *wisdom* and *compassion*. Taming people is a hard business and we know that the Buddha had some tough customers. But he was successful even with very difficult people though of course, due to their different capacities, that taming did not lead to the same results for everyone.

***Sathā Deva-manussānaṃ: Teacher of Devas and  
Humanity***

Most religious teachers will certainly be instructors of humanity, but they are taught by whatever divine (*deva*) source they conceive. Through his *wisdom* the Buddha was the Teacher of both, answering not only questions put to him by human beings but those posed by the gods as well.

***Buddho: Awakened and Awakener***

This also shows the Buddha's *wisdom* leading to Awakening or Enlightenment, and his *compassion* as Awakener of others. There is an unavoidable overlapping of qualities here with Sammā Sambuddho.

***Bhagavā: The Lord by Skilful Means Apportioning  
Dhamma***

This word seems to be related to the root *bhaj*, having the meaning of analysis, hence of *wisdom*, but the apportioning of Dhamma to others was done very skilfully and hence *compassionately*. It is customary to render this untranslatable word by "Lord" or "Exalted One," which of course in Buddhist usage does not imply belief in any supernatural being.

\* \* \*

The translations of these terms as given here and at the head of each chapter have been slightly expanded to bring out their meanings. More literal renderings may be found in some of the sutta excerpts, for instance, at 7.8.

May this book help to bring the Buddha into your hearts.



# 1

## ARAHAM

### The Accomplished Destroyer of Defilements

*The word “Araham” emphasises the Buddha’s purity, and freedom from all internal conflicts. That he began like ourselves, and that we too can attain the same purity and freedom, is the special significance of “Araham” and the great joy and hope of all Buddhists. Though the goal may seem distant, everyone has the potential to achieve it. What was this purified mind like? In the following passage the Buddha tells us about the very moment of his Enlightenment:*

**1.1** “When my concentrated mind was purified, bright, unblemished, and rid of imperfection, when it had become malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed my mind to the knowledge of the destruction of the taints. I had direct knowledge, as it actually is, that ‘This is suffering,’ that ‘This is the origin of suffering,’ that ‘This is the cessation of suffering,’ and that ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ I had direct knowledge, as it actually is, that ‘These are the taints,’ that ‘This is the origin of the taints,’ that ‘This is the cessation of the taints,’ and that ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of the taints.’ Knowing thus and seeing thus, my heart was liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When liberated, there came the knowledge, ‘It is liberated.’ I had direct knowledge, ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life

has been lived, what was to be done is done, there is no more of this to come.’ This was the third true knowledge attained by me in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who is diligent, ardent, and self-controlled. But I allowed no such pleasant feeling as arose in me to gain power over my mind.”

*In the course of his long teaching career he formulated the Enlightenment experience in many different ways. Here is another, briefer passage illustrating the purity of that knowledge:*

**I.2** “Being myself subject to birth, ageing, ailment, death, sorrow, and defilement, seeing danger in what is subject to those things and seeking the unborn, unageing, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled supreme surcease of bondage, Nibbāna, I attained it. The knowledge and vision arose in me: My deliverance is unassailable; this is my last birth; there is now no renewal of being.”

*But it was not only at the time of Enlightenment that the Buddha experienced wonderful knowledge: all his life he knew the benefits flowing from that attainment. Contrast the passage below with ourselves and we shall see the difference! How inspiring it is, though, to know that “mere mortals” like ourselves can arouse in our own hearts this Arahaṃ-knowledge:*

**I.3** “Bhikkhus, there are four things which the Tathāgata does not have to guard against. . . . What are the four things which the Tathāgata does not have to guard against?

“Bhikkhus, in bodily action the Tathāgata is wholly pure; in such action there is no wrongdoing by the

Tathāgata which he should guard against, thinking, ‘Let none know this of me.’

“Bhikkhus, in speech the Tathāgata is wholly pure; in such action there is no wrongdoing by the Tathāgata which he should guard against, thinking, ‘Let none know this of me.’

“Bhikkhus, in thought the Tathāgata is wholly pure; in such action there is no wrongdoing by the Tathāgata which he should guard against, thinking, ‘Let none know this of me.’

“Bhikkhus, in livelihood the Tathāgata is wholly pure; in mode of livelihood there is no wrongdoing by the Tathāgata which he should guard against, thinking, ‘Let none know this of me.’”

*The Buddha was, after all, a human being, with a human body equipped with human sense-organs. So what was the difference between him and us? The following extract points out one important difference:*

**1.4** “The Blessed One, friend, has eyes and he sees objects with the eye. But in the Blessed One there is no desire or lust. The Blessed One’s heart is completely liberated. The Blessed One has ears ... nose ... tongue ... body ... a mind and he knows thoughts with the mind. But in the Blessed One there is no desire or lust. The Blessed One’s heart is completely liberated.”

*This difference between an Arahant and an ordinary person is clearly brought out in the next quotation. What would it be like to “dwell blissfully” despite the cessation of delightful forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts?*

**1.5** “Gods and men, bhikkhus, delight in forms, they are excited by forms. Owing to the change, the fading away, and the cessation of forms, woefully, bhikkhus, dwell gods and men. They delight in sounds, scents, tastes, tangibles, and ideas, and are excited by them. . . . Owing to the change, the fading away and the cessation of ideas, woefully, bhikkhus, do gods and men dwell.

“But the Tathāgata, bhikkhus, the Arahāt, the Fully Awakened One, having understood as they really are the arising, the passing away, the satisfaction, the misery, and the escape from forms — he delights not in forms, is not attached to forms, is not excited by forms. By the change, the fading away, and the cessation of forms, blissfully, bhikkhus, dwells the Tathāgata. . . . By the change, the fading away and the cessation of sounds, scents, tastes, tangibles and ideas, blissfully, bhikkhus, dwells the Tathāgata.”

*Let us look at another aspect of this marvellous liberating knowledge: the complete freedom from conceit due to the awareness of not-self, voidness of self, everywhere:*

**1.6** “So, bhikkhus, a Tathāgata is one who sees what is to be seen, but he has no conceit of what has been seen, he has no conceit of what has not been seen, he has no conceit of what will be seen, he has no conceit about one who sees.

“He is one who hears what is to be heard, but he has no conceit of what has been heard, he has no conceit of what has not been heard, he has no conceit of what will be heard, he has no conceit about one who hears.

“He is one who senses what is to be sensed, but he has no conceit of what has been sensed, he has no conceit

of what has not been sensed, he has no conceit of what will be sensed, he has no conceit about one who senses.

“He is one who cognises what is to be cognised, but he has no conceit of what has been cognised, he has no conceit of what has not been cognised, he has no conceit of what will be cognised, he has no conceit about one who cognises.

“So, bhikkhus, the Tathāgata, in regard to things seen, heard, sensed, and cognised, is indeed ‘Thus’ (*tādi*). Moreover, I declare there is none greater or more excellent than ‘He who is Thus.’”

*How wonderful this is, that one who no longer conceives has no conceit! The Arahat no longer needs to conceive because he knows directly with wisdom and insight the way things truly are. To lead beings like ourselves mired in ignorance to this knowledge, he teaches the Four Noble Truths. He is not attached to them as dogmas but uses them to open our eyes, and so if others insult or praise such a selfless one, he is neither dejected nor overjoyed:*

**1.7** “If (for the teaching of the Four Noble Truths) others revile, abuse, scold, and insult the Tathāgata, on that account, bhikkhus, the Tathāgata will not feel annoyance, nor dejection, nor displeasure in his heart. And if for that others respect, revere, honour and venerate the Tathāgata, on that account, bhikkhus, the Tathāgata will not feel delight, nor joy, nor elation in his heart. If for that others respect, revere, honour and venerate the Tathāgata, he will think, ‘It is towards this (mind-body aggregate) which has already been fully comprehended, that they perform such acts.’”

*Indeed, what could move the passions of an Arahat, one who has cooled down all fevered longings, in whom all the fires have gone out, and who has no attachment to any sort of bodily comfort? Let us compare the following attitude to comfort and sleep with our own. How would we manage with only a cotton robe or two over us and some leaves strewn on the bare ground while cold winds blow strongly?*

**1.8** At one time the Exalted One was staying near Āḷavi at the cow-path in the Simsapa Grove, lodging on the leaf-strewn ground.

Now, Prince Hatthaka of Āḷavi passed that place on a walk, and as he went along he saw the Exalted One in that place, seated on the ground strewn with leaves. On seeing him, he approached, and bowing down to him, he sat down to one side. Seated thus, Hatthaka of Āḷavi said this to the Exalted One: “Lord, has the Exalted One slept well?”

“Yes, young sir, I slept well. I am one of those who sleep well in the world.”

“But, Lord, the winter nights are cold and this is a time of frost; hard is the ground trampled by the hooves of cattle, thin the carpet of fallen leaves, sparse are the leaves on the tree, cold are the monk’s yellow robes, and cold blows the Verambha wind.”

Then the Exalted One said: “Still, young sir, I slept well. In the world I am one of those who sleep well. Now, young sir, I shall question you about this and you may reply as you think fit. What do you think, young sir? Suppose a householder or a householder’s son has a house with a gabled roof, plastered inside and out, draught-proof with close-fitting door and windows. Inside there is a couch, a long-fleeced rug, a bedspread of white wool, a flower-embroidered coverlet spread with costly antelope-hide, with a canopy

above and a scarlet cushion at either end. A lamp is burning there and four wives wait upon him with all their charms. Now, what do you think, young sir? Would he sleep well or not? What do you think about this?"

"Yes, Lord, he would sleep well. He is one of those who sleep well in the world."

"Well now, young sir, what do you think? In that householder or householder's son would there not arise torments of body or of mind born of lust, born of aversion, born of delusion, so that tortured by them he would sleep badly?"

"That could well be so, Lord."

"Well, young sir, as to those torments of body or of mind born of lust, born of aversion, born of delusion, tortured by which he would sleep badly, that lust, aversion, and delusion have been abandoned by the Tathāgata, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, made unable to grow again, of a nature not to arise again in future time. That is why I sleep well."

Always he sleeps well,  
 the Brahmin quenched indeed.  
 Undefined by lust, cool become,  
 and loosed from bonds,  
 With all the barriers burst,  
 pain from his heart removed,  
 Happy the Calm One lives,  
 who wins to peace of mind.

*If we answer honestly, perhaps we shall be among those who prefer that snug gabled house with all its comforts—then we would be sure to sleep well! Yes, we should sleep the tortured sleep born of lust, aversion, and delusion, and we*

*shall sleep in that way for a long, long time. That first Arahat, the Buddha, reproves us and shows how sleeping without these defilements is superior to the sleep of ignorance, however comfortable that may appear to be. Here is the Buddha again contrasting one with defilements and taints with one like himself:*

**1.9** “Him I call deluded in whom the taints that defile, that renew being, ripen in future suffering, and lead to birth, ageing, and death, are unabandoned; for it is with the non-abandoning of taints that a man is deluded. Him I call undeluded in whom these taints are abandoned; for it is with the abandoning of taints that a man is undeluded. Just as a palm tree with its crown cut off is incapable of growing, so too in the Tathāgata these taints are abandoned, cut off, severed at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with, and not subject to future arising.”

*Palm trees of any kind, once their crown is severed, can never grow again; using this simile the Buddha speaks of his own taints as having been cut off and never able to arise again. Those taints produce the attachment to the five aggregates composing a person: body or form, feeling, perception (recognition, identification, and memory), mental formations, and consciousness. When there is no concept or conceit of a person, no view of a person, what can be said of such a one after death? Even in this life it is hard to find exactly what is enlightened, what to speak about after death? Here is a great mystery:*

**1.10** “Vaccha, going to view, this has been got rid of by the Tathāgata. But, Vaccha, this has been seen by the Tathāgata, ‘Such is the body, such is the origin of the body, such is the cessation of the body; such is feeling,

such is the origin of feeling, such is the cessation of feeling; such is perception, such is the origin of perception, such is the cessation of perception; such are mental formations, such is the origin of mental formations, such is the cessation of mental formations; such is consciousness, such is the origin of consciousness, such is the cessation of consciousness.’ Therefore, I say that by the destruction, dispassion, cessation, renunciation, and rejection of all conceits, of all supposings, of all latent pride of I-making and mine-making, the Tathāgata is freed without clinging.” ...

“Even so, Vaccha, that body, that feeling, that perception, those mental formations, that consciousness by which one might designate the Tathāgata has been got rid of by the Tathāgata, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump that comes to no further growth and is not liable to arise again in future. Freed from reckoning by body, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness is the Tathāgata, he is deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as is the great ocean. ‘Arises’ does not apply. ‘Does not arise’ does not apply. ‘Both arises and does not arise’ does not apply. ‘Neither arises nor does not arise’ does not apply.”

*But if we know the aggregates as empty, as void, then we shall have the answer to this mystery:*

**1.11** The Kinsman of the Sun made clear:  
 Form compared to a fleck of foam,  
 Feeling to a bubble compared,  
 And perception to a mirage,  
 Formations compared to a plantain tree,  
 And consciousness to a magical trick.

*Nothing much can be said about one who has done it all, finished it all with no loose ends left dangling. Here our Great Teacher tells the monks what it is like for a Tathāgata:*

**1.12** “The Tathāgata’s bodily continuity exists without any craving that can lead to future existence. Gods and men will see him only so long as that bodily continuity exists. Just as, bhikkhus, when the stalk of a bunch of mangoes has been cut, all the mangoes that were hanging on that stalk go with it, just so, bhikkhus, the Tathāgata’s bodily continuity is deprived of craving for rebirth. So long as his continuity shall last, so long will gods and men behold him. On the dissolution of the body, beyond the end of his life, neither gods nor men will behold him.”

*To that Arahat who helps us to the destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion, to that One pure of all defilements, finished with the world’s complications, that One of true worth meriting the best offerings, we humbly bow down.*

## SAMMĀ SAMBUDDHO

## A Buddha Perfected by Himself

**2.1** “Bhikkhus, there is one person whose birth into the world is for the welfare of the multitude, for the happiness of the multitude, who is born out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of gods and men. Who is that one person? It is the Tathāgata, the Arahāt, the Perfectly Enlightened One. This is that one person.

“Bhikkhus, the appearance of one person is hard to be found in the world. Of which one person? Of the Tathāgata, the Arahāt, the Perfectly Enlightened One. Hard to be found in the world is that one person.

“Bhikkhus, one person born into the world is an extraordinary man. Which one person? The Tathāgata, the Arahāt, the Perfectly Enlightened One. He is that one person.

“Bhikkhus, there is one person born into the world: the Unique, the Nonpareil, the Supernal, the Equal of the Supernal, the Supernal Person, the Unequaled, the Equal to the Unequaled, the Incomparable One, the Best among humans. Who is that one person? It is the Tathāgata, the Arahāt, the Perfectly Enlightened One. This is that one person.

“Bhikkhus, upon the appearance of one person, there is appearance of great vision, great light, great radiance, of the six things unexcelled, the realisation of the four

discriminations, the penetration of the various elements, of the diversity of elements, the realisation of the fruits of knowing and seeing, the realisation of the fruits of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning and Arahatship. Of which one person? Of the Tathāgata, the Arahat, the Perfectly Enlightened One.”

*Now, if unenlightened people made statements like this they would probably be called conceited, but here we have a Buddha speaking to inspire us. Certainly, as a human being, he was very extraordinary indeed, yet the Buddha was not divine. From this alone we can gain heart. For if he had been some kind of god or God, from whom wonderful things are to be expected, Enlightenment would be divine too and humans could not hope to experience it. We would be excluded by our humanity. But the fact is that the Buddha was born and died like all other human beings. The marvellous thing is what he accomplished between those two events and what we too can accomplish if we are diligent enough.*

*For that we need faith. Diligence, perseverance, and effort will only endure in times of crisis when there is deep faith. So, is the Buddha for us “the Unique, the Nonpareil, the Supernal”? Or are we just mildly interested? Here is another passage to deepen our faith in the Buddha:*

**2.2** “Whatever beings there are, bhikkhus, whether footless or two-footed, or four-footed, or many-footed, with form or without form, with perception or without perception, with neither-perception-nor-non-perception, of them, bhikkhus, the Tathāgata is proclaimed supreme, the Arahat, the Perfectly Enlightened One. Whoever has

faith in the Buddha, has faith in the supreme; indeed for those having faith in the supreme the result is supreme.”

*When we say that the Buddha is supreme, we do not thereby enter into any quarrel with those following other ways. For us he is supreme, his radiance, the Dhamma, lights the darkness of our way through the world. Of all lights, his is the best:*

2.3 The sun is bright by day,  
the moon enlights the night,  
armoured shines the warrior,  
contemplative the Brahmin;  
but all the day and night-time too,  
resplendent does the Buddha shine.

*The Buddha’s radiance is superior because it stems from the unconditioned element whereas all other lights, even the sun and moon, luminous though they be, are conditioned and thus must inevitably pass away. Here is the Buddha again on light and darkness:*

2.4 “Bhikkhus, as long as moon and sun do not arise in the world, so long is there no manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then blinding darkness, a total darkness. There is no discerning of night and day, the months and half-months nor the seasons and the years.

“But when moon and sun arise in the world, then there is a manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then no blinding darkness, no total darkness. Then night and day are discerned, the months and half-months and the seasons and the years.

“Similarly, bhikkhus, as long as a Tathāgata, a Perfected One, a Fully Enlightened One does not arise in

the world, so long is there no manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then a blinding darkness, a total darkness. There is no announcing, pointing out, declaring, establishing, expounding, explaining, and clarifying the Four Noble Truths.

“But when a Tathāgata, a Perfected One, a Fully Enlightened One arises in the world, then there is a manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then no blinding darkness, no total darkness. There is then an announcing ... a clarification of the Four Noble Truths.

“Therefore, bhikkhus, to realise, ‘This is suffering,’ an effort must be made ... To realise, ‘This is the causal origination of suffering,’ an effort must be made ... To realise, ‘This is the cessation of suffering,’ an effort must be made ... To realise, ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering,’ an effort must be made.”

*When we don't know how our sufferings and troubles arise, we are really in the inky blackness of ignorance. If told that they should be attributed to demons, or to a devil, or even to a god, we are still floundering without knowing how to get out, indeed whether there is a way out or not. Here is how the Buddha viewed gratification, danger, and escape with regard to the five aggregates composing what we call a human being:*

2.5 “Before my enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, I thought, ‘In the case of material form, of feeling, of perception, of formations, of consciousness, what is the gratification, what the danger, what the escape?’ Then I thought, ‘In the case of each the bodily pleasure and mental joy that arise in dependence

on these things are the gratification; the fact that these things are all impermanent, painful, and subject to change is the danger; the disciplining and abandoning of desire and lust for them is the escape.’

As long as I did not know by direct knowledge, as it actually is, that such was the gratification, such the danger, and such the escape in the case of these five aggregates affected by clinging, so long did I make no claim to have discovered the enlightenment that is supreme in the world with its deities, its Māras and its Divinities, in this generation with its monks and brahmins, with its princes and men. But as soon as I knew by direct knowledge, as it actually is, that such is the gratification, such the danger, and such the escape in the case of these five aggregates affected by clinging, then I claimed to have discovered the enlightenment that is supreme in the world with its deities, its Māras and its Divinities, in this generation with its monks and brahmins, with its princes and men.”

*He found the way out! And he told others only when he was quite sure. Below we have another text in which he shows us the way out through understanding the Four Noble Truths:*

**2.6** “This is the noble truth of suffering; this noble truth of suffering should be fully understood; this noble truth of suffering has been fully understood: such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the wisdom, the light, that arose in me in regard to things not heard before.

“This is the noble truth of the origin of suffering; this noble truth of the origin of suffering should be abandoned; this noble truth of the origin of suffering has been abandoned: such was the vision, the knowledge, the

understanding, the wisdom, the light, that arose in me in regard to things not heard before.

“This is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering; this noble truth of the cessation of suffering should be realised; this noble truth of the cessation of suffering has been realised: such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the wisdom, the light, that arose in me in regard to things not heard before.

“This is the noble truth of the practice-path leading to the cessation of suffering; this noble truth of the practice-path leading to the cessation of suffering should be developed; this noble truth of the practice-path leading to the cessation of suffering has been developed: such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the wisdom, the light, that arose in me in regard to things not heard before.

“As long as my knowing and seeing as it really is was not fully purified in these twelve aspects, in these three phases of each of the Four Noble Truths, I did not claim to have discovered the Perfect Enlightenment that is supreme in the world with its devas, Māras and Brahmās, in this generation with its monks and brahmins, with its princes and men. But as soon as my knowing and seeing as it really is was fully purified in these twelve aspects, in these three phases of each of the Four Noble Truths, then I claimed to have discovered the Perfect Enlightenment that is supreme in the world with its devas, Māras and Brahmās, in this generation with its monks and brahmins, with its princes and men. Knowing and seeing arose in me thus, ‘My heart’s deliverance is unassailable. This is the last birth. Now there is no renewal of being.’”

*These four truths are not a matter for blind belief. For instance, it is not necessary to believe in suffering—in dukkha.*

*It is one's everyday experience that "not getting what one wants is suffering." Dukkha of mind and body is an indisputable fact. Another fact also beyond debate is that suffering arises from selfish desires or cravings. The third truth—which states that suffering ceases when its cause, craving, ceases—cannot be a matter of contention. Finally, the Noble Eightfold Path which falls into the three sections of virtue, meditation, and wisdom is unquestionably wholesome and liberating. The Buddha, unlike most Indian teachers, encouraged his disciples to ask questions, not to accept his teaching blindly. Only then can we develop wisdom and see that ignorance and craving are the root causes of all our troubles. But not only should the Buddha's disciples question the Dhamma, they should also investigate the Buddha. Here the Buddha shows himself to be utterly fearless:*

2.7 “Bhikkhus, the Tathāgata should himself be questioned thus, ‘Do those impure states cognisable through the eye and through the ear exist in the Tathāgata or not?’ Bhikkhus, in answering, the Tathāgata would answer thus, ‘Those impure states cognisable through the eye and through the ear do not exist in the Tathāgata.’ ‘Do these mixed states (partly dark, partly bright) cognisable through eye and ear exist in the Tathāgata or not?’ Bhikkhus, in answering, the Tathāgata would answer thus, ‘Those mixed states cognisable through eye and ear do not exist in the Tathāgata.’ ‘Do those absolutely pure states cognisable through eye and ear exist in the Tathāgata or not?’ Bhikkhus, in answering the Tathāgata would answer thus, ‘Those absolutely pure states cognisable through eye and ear exist in the Tathāgata. This is my path, this is my pasture, and no one is like me in this.’”

“Bhikkhus, a disciple should approach a Teacher who speaks like this so as to hear Dhamma. The Teacher teaches him Dhamma, further and further, from excellence to excellence, what is dark (kamma), what is bright (kamma), and their respective results. As, bhikkhus, the Teacher gradually teaches Dhamma to the bhikkhu, further and further, from excellence to excellence, what is dark, what is bright, and their respective results, so by his direct knowledge of point after point of Dhamma, does he come gradually to fulfilment in Dhamma. Thus he has faith in the Teacher, ‘The Lord is a Perfectly Enlightened One; well expounded is Dhamma by the Lord; the Sangha is practising well.’”

*“The Lord is the Perfectly Enlightened One,” that is how we should develop our faith through practice, as that bhikkhu did above. But if we wish to know something of the range of a Buddha, the following passage on the ten powers of a Tathāgata and the four kinds of intrepidity he possesses will give us some idea:*

**2.8** “Sāriputta, the Tathāgata has these ten powers of a Tathāgata, possessing which he claims the herd-leader’s place, roars his lion’s roar before the assemblies, and sets the Divine Wheel rolling forward. What are the ten?

(1) “Here the Tathāgata understands, as it actually is, the possible as possible and the impossible as impossible. And that is a Tathāgata’s power that the Tathāgata has by virtue of which he claims the herd-leader’s place, roars his lion’s roar before the assemblies, and sets the Divine Wheel rolling forward.

(2) “Again, the Tathāgata understands, as it actually is, the ripening of kammās undertaken, past, future, and

present, with possibilities and with causes. And that is a Tathāgata's power ....

(3) "Again, the Tathāgata understands, as it actually is, where all ways lead. And that is a Tathāgata's power ...

(4) "Again, the Tathāgata understands, as it actually is, the world with its many and differing elements. And that is a Tathāgata's power ....

(5) "Again, the Tathāgata understands, as it actually is, how beings have different inclinations. And that is a Tathāgata's power ....

(6) "Again, the Tathāgata understands, as it actually is, the disposition of the faculties of other beings, other persons. And that is a Tathāgata's power ....

(7) "Again, the Tathāgata understands, as it actually is, the defilement of, the cleansing of and the emergence from the *jhānas*, liberations, concentrations, and attainments. And that is a Tathāgata's power ....

(8) "Again, the Tathāgata recollects his manifold past lives, that is to say, one birth, two births ... five births, ten births ... fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many aeons of (universal) contraction, many aeons of (universal) expansion, many aeons of (universal) contraction and expansion, 'There I was so named, of such a race, with such (qualities of) appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there I appeared elsewhere, and there too I was so named ... such my life-term; and passing away from there I appeared here.' Thus with details and particulars he recollects his manifold past lives. And that is a Tathāgata's power ....

(9) “Again, a Tathāgata, with the divine eye which is purified and surpasses the human, sees beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, well-behaved and ill-behaved. He understands how beings pass on according to their kammās, thus, ‘These worthy beings who are ill-conducted in body, speech and mind, revilers of the Noble Ones, wrong in their views, giving effect to wrong view in their kammās, have, on the dissolution of the body, after death, appeared in a state of deprivation, in a bad destination, in perdition, even in hell; but these worthy beings who are well-conducted in body, speech and mind, not revilers of the Noble Ones, right in their views, giving effect to right view in their kammās, have, on the dissolution of the body, after death, appeared in a good destination, even in the heavenly world’; thus with the divine eye ... he sees beings passing away and reappearing ... He understands how beings pass on according to their kammās. And that is a Tathāgata’s power ....

(10) “Again, the Tathāgata, by realisation himself with direct knowledge, here and now enters upon and abides in the deliverance of the heart and deliverance by understanding that are taintless, with (final) destruction of the taints. And that is a Tathāgata’s power that the Tathāgata has, by virtue of which he claims the herd-leader’s place, roars his lions’s roar in the assemblies, and sets the Divine Wheel rolling forward.

“The Tathāgata has these ten Tathāgata’s powers, possessing which he claims the herd-leader’s place ...”

\* \* \*

“Sāriputta, there are four kinds of intrepidity, possessing which the Tathāgata claims the herd-leader’s place, roars his lion’s roar in the assemblies, and sets the Divine Wheel rolling forward. What are the four?

“Here I can see no reason why any monk or brahmin or god or Māra or divinity at all in the world could, in accordance with the Dhamma, accuse me thus, ‘While you claim discovery of full enlightenment, you are not enlightened in these things.’ And seeing no reason for that, I abide in safety, fearlessness, and intrepidity.

“I can see no reason why any monk or brahmin or god or Māra or divinity at all in the world could, in accordance with the Dhamma, accuse me thus, ‘While you claim to have destroyed the taints, these taints have not been destroyed by you.’ And seeing no reason for that, I abide in intrepidity.

“I can see no reason why any monk or brahmin or god or Māra or divinity at all in the world could, in accordance with the Dhamma, accuse me thus, ‘Those things which are said by you to be obstructive are not in fact obstructive to one who practises them.’ And seeing no reason for that, I abide in intrepidity.

“I can see no reason why any monk or brahmin or god or Māra or divinity at all in the world could, in accordance with the Dhamma, accuse me thus, ‘Whoever is taught the Dhamma by you for his benefit, it does not lead rightly to the destruction of suffering in him when he practises it.’ And seeing no reason for that, I abide in safety, fearlessness and intrepidity.

“These are the four kinds of intrepidity possessing which the Tathāgata claims the herd-leader’s place, roars

his lion's roar in the assemblies and sets the Divine Wheel rolling forward.”

*It is not surprising that the Buddha being so extraordinary, received very great homage in his lifetime. That homage, however, sometimes went beyond what he would allow. Once, in the presence of the Buddha, the venerable Sāriputta declared that there has never been, never will be, and is not at present anyone more highly enlightened than the Master. The Buddha, perhaps with a smile, asked Sāriputta whether he had fully understood the minds of all the Buddhas of the past and of the future, and Sāriputta had to admit that he had not. Pressed further, he had to confess that he did not even know the present Buddha's mind fully! Still, he declares, his statement is valid in that it points out the necessary factors that all Buddhas must cultivate to reach perfect Enlightenment.*

**2.9** “For, Lord, the Arahats, the Fully Enlightened Ones of times gone by, all those Exalted Ones had abandoned the five hindrances—the mental defilements that weaken insight, had well established their minds in the four foundations of mindfulness, had duly cultivated the seven factors of enlightenment, and were fully enlightened in Unsurpassed Perfect Enlightenment.

“And, Lord, the Arahats, the Fully Enlightened Ones of times to come, all those Exalted Ones will abandon the five hindrances—the mental defilements that weaken insight, will well establish their minds in the four foundations of mindfulness, will duly cultivate the seven factors of enlightenment, and will be fully enlightened in Unsurpassed Perfect Enlightenment.

“And the Exalted One, too, Lord, being at present the Arahata, the Fully Enlightened One, has abandoned

the five hindrances—the mental defilements that weaken insight, has well established his mind in the four foundations of mindfulness, has duly cultivated the seven factors of enlightenment, and is fully enlightened in Unsurpassed Perfect Enlightenment.”

*A question that seemingly arose even in the Buddha’s time concerned the difference between one who is a Sammā Sambuddha, a Buddha perfected by himself (or Perfectly Enlightened One), and one enlightened after following his teachings. According to the original Pali suttas, a Sammā Sambuddha and his Arahat disciples are identical in their realisation of the essentials of Enlightenment, in their freedom from defilements, and in their liberation from the round of birth and death. They differ primarily in that a Sammā Sambuddha discovers and proclaims the path to liberation and his disciples achieve the goal by following that path. This point is clearly made in the following sutta:*

**2.10** “Bhikkhus, a Tathāgata, Arahat, and Perfectly Enlightened One, because of dispassion for the body, detachment from the body, cessation of craving for the body, is called ‘freed without grasping’ and ‘perfectly enlightened.’ And a bhikkhu freed by wisdom, because of dispassion for the body, detachment from the body, cessation of craving for the body, is called ‘freed without grasping’ and ‘freed by wisdom.’

“A Tathāgata, Arahat, and Perfectly Enlightened One, because of dispassion for, detachment from, and cessation of craving for feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness, is called ‘freed without grasping’ and ‘perfectly enlightened.’ And a bhikkhu freed by wisdom, because of dispassion for, detachment from, and cessation

of craving for feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness, is called ‘freed without grasping’ and ‘freed by wisdom.’

“Now, bhikkhus, what is the distinction, what is the divergence, what is the difference between a Tathāgata, Arahāt, and Perfectly Enlightened One and a bhikkhu freed by wisdom?”

The Exalted One said: “A Tathāgata, bhikkhus, an Arahāt and Perfectly Enlightened One, is the discoverer of the undiscovered way, the generator of the ungenerated way, the expounder of the unexpounded way, the way-knower, the way-penetrator, the way-expert, and now his disciples coming afterwards live following the path.”

*However, because a Sammā Sambuddha discovers the path unaided, and out of his great compassion makes it known to others, he is venerated even by the Arahats:*

**2.11** “Master Gotama, in what way is a bhikkhu an Arahāt with taints destroyed, one who has lived the holy life, done what was to be done, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, destroyed the fetters of being, and is completely liberated through final knowledge?”

“Here, Aggivessana, any kind of material form whatever ... Any kind of feeling whatever ... Any kind of perception whatever ... Any kind of mental formations whatever ... Any kind of consciousness whatever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, a bhikkhu has seen all this as it actually is with right understanding thus, ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,’ and through not clinging he is liberated. It is in this way that a

bhikkhu is an Arahāt with taints destroyed ... and is completely liberated through final knowledge.

“When a bhikkhu’s mind is thus liberated, he possesses three unsurpassable qualities: unsurpassable vision, unsurpassable practice of the way, and unsurpassable deliverance. When a bhikkhu is thus liberated, he still honours, respects, reveres, and venerates the Tathāgata thus, ‘The Blessed One is enlightened and he teaches the Dhamma for the sake of Enlightenment. The Blessed One is tamed and he teaches the Dhamma for taming oneself. The Blessed One is at peace and he teaches the Dhamma for the sake of peace. The Blessed One has crossed over and he teaches the Dhamma for crossing over. The Blessed One has attained Nibbāna and he teaches the Dhamma for attaining Nibbāna.’”

*So, one should revere Buddhas and Arahats while practising Dhamma and one should not argue about them: “This is superior, that is inferior.” That can only become an egoistic entanglement, self arguing about the selfless, arguing about what it does not know. We should remember that Buddhas are traceless:*

**2.12** That Buddha traceless of infinite range,  
whose victory none may ever undo,  
whose vanquished follow to no world,  
then by which track will you trace him?

That Buddha traceless of infinite range,  
in whom there is no entangling craving  
and no ensnaring not anywhere leading,  
then by which track will you trace him?

*Leave Buddha-speculation alone, otherwise we shall manufacture for ourselves a spiritual manifoldness (papañca) piled on top of our worldly tendency to the manifold. The deluded mind tends to diversify thoughts along the tracks of craving, conceit, and views and so becomes completely entangled. When these tendencies operate on a worldly level, they produce the rampant diversifying trends seen in every group of products, but when they are applied to religious matters, they result in dogmas and inflexible doctrines, especially the tendency to views. This is far from the Buddha's intention in teaching Dhamma. We must stop looking outside—no path in the sky—and stop expecting salvation from someone other than ourselves. The peaceful one can only be within:*

**2.13** In skies above there is no path,  
no peaceful one is found without,  
in manifoldness do folk delight,  
Tathāgatas are manifold-free.

In skies above there is no path,  
no peaceful one is found without,  
no thing conditioned ever lasts,  
no Buddha is ever shaken.

*To that Perfectly Enlightened One who has opened the eye of wisdom and seen Dhamma, the source of light in the darkness of the round of existence, whose understanding is brilliant as a diamond and illumines the three worlds, to that One in whom confusion no longer lurks, we bow our heads to his lotus feet.*

## VIJJĀ-CARAṆA-SAMPANNO

Complete in Clear Knowledge  
and Compassionate Conduct

*If the Buddha possessed only knowledge (vijjā), he would never have risen from under the Bodhi tree but would have passed away just there without teaching. If he possessed only good conduct (caraṇa), he would have remained a bodhisatta or a good-hearted worldling. But with these two qualities mutually supporting each other, developed to the highest degree, he became the Enlightened One—“complete in clear knowledge and compassionate conduct.” In the first text of this chapter we see a king bowing to the Buddha—and kings do not bow their heads easily—revering the Buddha for ten reasons. Some of these pertain to knowledge, others to conduct:*

**3.1** Bending low before the Blessed One, with his head on the ground, King Pasenadi kissed the Blessed One’s feet embracing them with his hands. Then he announced his name: “I am Pasenadi, Lord, the Kosala King. I am Pasenadi, Lord, the Kosala King.”

“But, great king, what reason do you see for showing to this body such profound humility and offering it such loving devotion?”

“To express my grateful thanks, Lord; for that reason do I show to the Blessed One such profound humility and offer to him my loving devotion.

“For the Blessed One, Lord, lives for the welfare of the multitude, for the happiness of the multitude; because a great many people have been established by him in the holy method (of the Teaching), namely, in noble and beneficial principles. It is for this reason, Lord, that I show to the Blessed One such profound humility and offer him my loving devotion.

“Again, Lord, the Blessed One is virtuous, of virtue that is mature, of virtue that is holy, of virtue that is beneficial; he is endowed with beneficial virtue. It is for this reason ....

“Again, Lord, the Blessed One has been a forest dweller for a long time, he resorts to remote forest lands, to secluded dwellings. It is for this reason ....

“Again, Lord, the Blessed One is contented with whatever robes, alms food, dwelling, remedies and medicines he receives as requisites. It is for this reason ....

“Again, Lord, the Blessed One is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, being the incomparable field of merit for the world. It is for this reason ....

“Again, Lord, the Blessed One obtains at will, without difficulty and trouble (the opportunity for) talk that is helpful to an austere life, useful for mental clarity, namely, talk on frugality, contentedness, solitude, seclusion, application of energy, virtue, concentration, wisdom, deliverance, and the knowledge and vision of deliverance. It is for this reason ....

“Again, Lord, the Blessed One attains at will, without difficulty and trouble, the four jhānas, which make for loftiness of mind and for a happy abiding in this present life. It is for this reason ....

“Again, Lord, the Blessed One recollects his manifold past lives, that is to say, one birth, two births ... (see 2. 8

above) ... thus with their details and particulars he recollects his manifold past lives. It is for this reason ....

“Again, Lord, the Blessed One, with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, sees beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, happy or unhappy in their destiny ... (see 2. 8 above) ... he understands beings as faring according to their kmmas. It is for this reason ....

“And again, Lord, the Blessed One, after destroying the taints, having realised himself with direct knowledge the taint-free liberation of the heart and liberation by wisdom, here and now enters upon and dwells in it. It is for this reason, Lord, that I show to the Blessed One such profound humility and offer him my loving devotion.”

*The good King Pasenadi had such great faith in the Buddha and could express that truthfully through a lifetime of association with him. People who did not know him so well sometimes had strange and distorted ideas as to the knowledges possessed by him. Below, we have a wanderer conversing with the Buddha; the latter tells him that he is rightly called a possessor of the three true knowledges (tevijjā). In using this term the Buddha deliberately gave it a new and deeper significance, for to brahmins it meant one who knew by heart the Three Vedas, the ancient hymns and spells of the Aryan peoples. He was not content with traditional knowledge of texts passed down from the past because he wanted to know Truth for himself. Hence his redefinition of these knowledges:*

**3.2** “Vaccha, if you answer thus, ‘The monk Gotama has the three true knowledges,’ you will be saying what I say without misrepresenting me with what is not so, and you will explain in accordance with the Dhamma with

no legitimate deduction from your assertion that might provide grounds for condemning you.

“For, insofar as I wish, I recollect my manifold past lives with their details and particulars.

“And in so far as I wish, with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I see beings passing away and reappearing and I understand how beings pass on according to their karmas.

“And by realisation myself with direct knowledge I here and now enter upon and abide in the deliverance of the heart and the deliverance by understanding that are taint-free with the destruction of the taints.”

*Sometimes the Buddha had to face much more difficult people than either the faithful king or the doubtful wanderer, among them many brahmins proud of their birth and supposed purity of family. Here is one such young man whom the Buddha is correcting on vijjā and caraṇa. No doubt young Ambaṭṭha thinks vijjā means knowing the Three Vedas while, caraṇa means their recitation. The Buddha knew otherwise and politely deflates Ambaṭṭha’s views:*

**3.3** “Indeed, Ambaṭṭha, this verse was spoken by the Brahmā Sanamkumāra:

‘Of those who put their trust in rank,  
the noble-warrior is best;  
But among gods and humans too,  
One perfect in knowledge and conduct is best.’

“Now, this verse was well-chanted not ill-chanted, it was well-spoken not ill-spoken, it was meaningful and not devoid of meaning (when said) by the Brahmā

Sanamkumāra; by me too it is approved. I also speak thus, Ambaṭṭha:

‘Of those who put their trust in rank,  
the noble-warrior is best;  
But among gods and humans too,  
One perfect in knowledge and conduct is best.’

“But, Master Gotama, what is that conduct and what is that knowledge?”

“In the incomparable perfection of knowledge and conduct, Ambaṭṭha, matters of birth, rank, and conceited pride are not spoken about, such as ‘You are as worthy as I’ or ‘You are not as worthy as I.’ Wherever there is marriage or giving in marriage or both of them, then matters of birth, rank, and conceited pride are spoken about in this way, ‘You are as worthy as I’ or ‘You are not as worthy as I.’ Whoever is in the bondage of birth, of rank, or of conceited pride, or in the bondage of marriage or giving in marriage, they are far from the incomparable perfection of knowledge and conduct. Only when one has abandoned all these bondages can the incomparable perfection of knowledge and conduct be realised.”

*In the next quotation, rather than “compassionate conduct,” virtue is emphasised. Both are included in the term caraṇa. The brahmin here thinks of himself and his own brahmin caste, but by “brahmin” the Buddha means one who is enlightened. Still, the brahmin is aware how these two qualities purify each other:*

**3.4** “Of these two factors (virtue and wisdom), O brahmin, is it possible to put one aside so that a brahmin

possessed of one of them may say of himself ‘I am a brahmin,’ and speak rightly and not fall into falsehood?”

“No indeed, Master Gotama! Certainly virtue is cleansed by wisdom and wisdom is cleansed by virtue. Where there is virtue there wisdom is found; while where there is wisdom there virtue is found. The virtuous are wise while the wise are virtuous. Virtue and wisdom are proclaimed the best things in the world! Just as hand is cleansed with hand or foot is cleansed with foot, so it is certain that virtue is cleansed by wisdom and wisdom is cleansed by virtue. They are proclaimed the best things in the world!”

“It is so, brahmin. Certainly virtue is cleansed by wisdom and wisdom is cleansed by virtue.”

*We cannot expect Enlightenment to come our way if these two qualities are not developed together. Developing only knowledge we shall become only worldly-wise, even if it is much book-study on Buddhism, while with only virtue we shall certainly be good and truthful but have no wisdom. These two must accompany each other: if one undertakes and keeps the Five Precepts, then meditation practice, particularly those kinds promoting mindfulness (sati) and insight (vipassanā), should be undertaken too. Of course, it is more difficult to practise meditation than to keep precepts, for the latter are perceived as more directly relevant to ordinary household life than meditation. Therefore, the Buddha says, when common people praise him they tend to stress virtue or morality, not the true knowledges which are beyond their ken. Though virtue and morality do not represent the heights of a Buddha’s knowledge, no Buddha would become such without them. His conduct also adheres to these pure principles because they are Dhamma:*

3.5 “If an ordinary man desires to praise the Tathāgata, he would speak only of things of small value, of mere morality. And what are those qualities of morality that are of insignificant value and that he speaks of a little?

“‘Having abstained from taking the life of any living being, the Samaṇa Gotama refrains from the destruction of life. He has laid the stick and weapon aside, has shame and fear of evil, shows kindness towards all beings, and is full of solicitude for the welfare of all sentient beings.’ It is thus that the ordinary man, when speaking in praise of the Tathāgata, might speak.

“‘Having abstained from the taking of what is not given, the Samaṇa Gotama refrains from taking what is not given to him. He takes only what is given to him, appreciates the giving by others, and lives in honesty and purity of heart.’

“‘Having abstained from unchastity, the Samaṇa Gotama practises the holy life of chastity. He refrains from (this) common practice, from the sexual act which is the practice of the village people.’

“‘Getting rid of lying words, the Samaṇa Gotama refrains from falsehood. He speaks truth and nothing but the truth; faithful and trustworthy, he does not break his word to the world.’

“‘Getting rid of slander, the Samaṇa Gotama refrains from calumny. What he hears here he does not repeat elsewhere to raise a quarrel against the people here; what he hears elsewhere he does not repeat here to raise a quarrel against the people there. Thus he binds together those who are divided, encourages those who are friends, makes peace, loves peace, is impassioned for peace, a speaker of words leading to peace.’

“Getting rid of rudeness of speech, the Samaṇa Gotama refrains from using harsh language. He speaks only those words that are blameless, pleasant to the ear, lovely, reaching to the heart, polite, pleasing to the people, and beloved of the people.’

“Getting rid of frivolous talk, the Samaṇa Gotama refrains from vain conversation. At appropriate times he speaks, in accordance with the facts, words full of meaning on the Dhamma, on the Vinaya. And at the right time he speaks words worthy to be noted in one’s mind, fitly illustrated and divided according to relevancy of facts.”

*Even the Buddha, we see, kept to these moral principles, though of course he did not have to strive to keep them as such a thing is natural for an Enlightened One. If the Buddha kept these precepts, then where shall we be if we neglect them? Despite what some modern Buddhists would like to believe, the suttas leave no doubt that without morality there can be no Enlightenment, nor any other spiritual progress. Here is a long text which details the Buddha’s conduct as seen through the eyes of a young brahmin who observed him carefully over a period of months and then reported all this to his teacher:*

**3.6** “When he walks, he steps out with the right foot first. He does not extend his foot too far or put it down too near. He walks neither too quickly nor too slowly. He walks without his knees knocking together. He walks without his ankles knocking together. He walks without raising or lowering his thighs or bringing them together or keeping them apart. When he walks, only the lower part of his body oscillates, and he walks with no bodily effort. When he turns to look, he does so with his whole

body. He does not look vertically down. He does not look vertically up. He does not walk looking about. He looks a plough-yoke's length before him; beyond that he has the vision of unhindered knowledge.

“When he goes indoors, he does not raise or lower his body or bend it forward or back. He turns round neither too far from the seat nor too near it. He does not lean on the seat with his hand. He does not throw his body down on to the seat.

“When seated indoors, he does not fidget with his hands. He does not fidget with his feet. He does not sit with his knees crossed. He does not sit with his ankles crossed. He does not sit with his hand holding his chin. When seated indoors, he is not afraid; he does not shiver and tremble, he is not nervous; his hair does not stand up on that account, and he is intent on seclusion.

“When he receives water for the bowl, he does not raise or lower the bowl or tip it forwards or backwards. He receives neither too little nor too much water for the bowl. He washes the bowl without splashing. He washes the bowl without turning it about. He does not put the bowl on the floor to wash his hands; when his hands are washed, the bowl is washed; and when the bowl is washed, his hands are washed. He pours the water for the bowl away neither too far nor too near, and he does not pour it about.

“When he receives rice, he does not raise or lower the bowl or tip it forwards or backwards. He receives neither too little nor too much rice. He adds sauces in the right proportion; he does not exceed the right amount of sauce in the mouthful. He turns the mouthful over three or four times in his mouth and then swallows it; and no

rice grain enters his body unmasticated nor does any remain in his mouth; then he takes another mouthful. He takes his food experiencing the taste without experiencing greed for the taste. The food he takes has five factors: it is neither for amusement nor for intoxication, nor for making the body beautiful and attractive, but only for the endurance and continuance of this body, for the ending of discomfort, and for assisting the holy life, ‘Thus I shall terminate old feelings without arousing new feelings, and I shall live in comfort, healthy, and blameless.’

“When he has eaten and receives water for the bowl, he does not raise or lower the bowl or tip it forwards or backwards. He receives neither too little nor too much water for the bowl. He washes the bowl without making a splashing noise. He washes the bowl without turning it about. He does not put the bowl on the floor to wash his hands; when his hands are washed, the bowl is washed; when the bowl is washed, his hands are washed. He pours the water for the bowl away neither too far nor too near, and he does not pour it about.

“When he has eaten, he puts the bowl on the floor neither too far nor too near; and he is neither careless of the bowl nor over-solicitous about it.

“When he has eaten, he sits in silence for a while, but he does not let the time for the blessing go by. When he gives the blessing after eating, he does not do so criticising that meal or expecting another meal; he instructs, urges, rouses, and encourages that audience with talk purely on Dhamma. When he has finished that, he rises from his seat and departs.

“He walks neither too fast nor too slow, and he does not go as one does who wants to get away.

“His robe is worn neither too high nor too low on his body, nor tight against his body nor loose on his body, nor does the wind blow his robe away from his body. Dust and dirt do not soil his body.

“When he has gone to the forest, he sits down on a seat made ready. Having sat down, he washes his feet. He does not concern himself with pedicure. After washing his feet he seats himself cross-legged, sets his body erect, and establishes mindfulness in front of him. He does not occupy his mind with self-affliction or affliction of others or affliction of both; he sits with his mind set on his own welfare, on others’ welfare, and on the welfare of both; in fact on the welfare of the whole world.

“When he goes to the monastery, he teaches Dhamma to an audience. He neither flatters nor berates that audience; he instructs, urges, rouses, and encourages that audience with talk purely on Dhamma. The speech issuing from his mouth has eight qualities: it is distinct, intelligible, melodious, audible, ringing, incisive, deep, and sonorous; but while his voice is intelligible as far as the confines of the audience, his speech does not extend beyond that audience. When the people have been instructed, urged, roused and encouraged by him, they rise from their seats and depart, looking only to him and concerned with nothing else.

“Sir, we have seen Master Gotama walking, we have seen him standing, we have seen him indoors seated in silence, we have seen him indoors eating, we have seen him indoors sitting in silence after eating, we have seen him giving the blessing after eating, we have seen him going to the monastery, we have seen him sitting in the

monastery in silence, we have seen him in the monastery teaching Dhamma to an audience. Such is Master Gotama. Such he is and more than that.”

When this was said, the brahmin Brahmāyu rose from his seat, and arranging his upper robe on one shoulder, he raised his hands palms together towards where the Blessed One was, and he uttered this exclamation three times: “Honour to the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened! Honour to the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened! Honour to the Blessed One, accomplished and fully enlightened! Now, suppose, some time or other, we were to meet Master Gotama. Suppose we had some conversation together.”

*The old brahmin teacher was impressed even by this much reported of “Master Gotama.” Another passage from the suttas impresses us even more about what the Buddha would or would not say:*

**3.7** “Whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unconnected with the goal, disliked by others and disagreeable to them, that speech the Tathāgata does not utter. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be factual and true but not connected with the goal, disliked by others and disagreeable to them, neither does the Tathāgata utter that speech. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true and connected with the goal, but not liked by others and disagreeable to them, the Tathāgata is aware of the right time for explaining that speech. Whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unconnected with the goal, but liked by others and agreeable to them, that speech the Tathāgata does not utter. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows

to be factual and true but not connected with the goal, but liked by others and agreeable to them, neither does the Tathāgata utter that speech. And whatever speech the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true and connected with the goal, liked by others and agreeable to them, the Tathāgata is aware of the right time for explaining that speech. What is the reason for this? It is that the Tathāgata has compassion for creatures.”

*The Buddha mentions six varieties of speech, of which he uses only two. The first would include abuse and slander, which is obviously unsuitable for a teacher of Dhamma—and should be avoided by ourselves as well. The second kind would be reporting worldly violence distressing for the listeners—it sounds a bit like what is commonly called “the news.” The third, spoken by the Buddha, is an exhortation to backsliders, usually monks and nuns. The fourth is no doubt flattery, while the next is worldly gossip. The last, also spoken by the Buddha, is the teaching of Dhamma and Vinaya, Doctrine and Discipline. Underlying these exterior actions of body and speech there are always thoughts. Here is what the Buddha said about his thoughts:*

3.8 “Bhikkhus, two thoughts occur often to the Tathāgata, Arahat, Perfectly Enlightened One: the thought of harmlessness and the thought of seclusion. The Tathāgata delights in and enjoys doing harm to none. To that Tathāgata, delighting in and enjoying doing harm to none, a thought often occurs like this, ‘By this way of living I do no harm to anything at all, whether frail or firm.’

“Bhikkhus, the Tathāgata delights in and enjoys seclusion. To that Tathāgata, who delights in and enjoys

seclusion, a thought often occurs like this, ‘Whatever is unwholesome has been destroyed.’”

*This is another way of looking at vijjā-caraṇa, here reversed: the thought of harmlessness is on the side of conduct, the thought of seclusion—that is, the ultimate aloneness of mind purified of all underlying tendencies to evil—is on the side of knowledge. Harmlessness is an aspect of compassion, a quality that is so marked in the Buddha as to earn him the title “Lord of Great Compassion” (mahākāruṇiko nātho). This is well illustrated in many longer stories, such as those in the Dhammapada Commentary and the Jātakas, the stories of the past lives of the Bodhisatta. Here is an incident recorded in the Vinaya, the Monks’ Discipline, which shows his compassion at work:*

**3.9** Now, a certain bhikkhu was once sick with dysentery, and he lay fouled in his own urine and excrement. As the Blessed One was going the round of the lodgings with the venerable Ānanda as his attendant monk he came to that bhikkhu’s dwelling. When he saw him lying where he was, he went up to him and said: “What is your sickness, bhikkhu?”

“It is dysentery, Blessed One.”

“But, bhikkhu, have you no attendant?”

“No, Blessed One.”

“Why do they not look after you, bhikkhu?”

“I am no use to the bhikkhus, Lord; that is why they do not look after me.”

Then the Blessed One said to the venerable Ānanda: “Ānanda, go and fetch some water. Let us wash this bhikkhu.”

“Even so, Lord,” the venerable Ānanda replied, and he brought some water. The Blessed One poured out the water and the venerable Ānanda washed the bhikkhu. Then the Blessed One took him by the head and the venerable Ānanda took him by the feet, and they raised him up and put him on a bed.

With this as the occasion and this as the reason the Blessed One summoned the bhikkhus and asked them: “Bhikkhus, is there a bhikkhu sick in a certain dwelling?”

“There is, Blessed One.”

“What is that bhikkhu’s illness?”

“He has dysentery, Lord.”

“Has he anyone to look after him?”

“No, Blessed One.”

“Why do the bhikkhus not look after him’?”

“Lord, that bhikkhu is of no use to the bhikkhus; that is why they do not look after him.”

“Bhikkhus, you have neither mother nor father to look after you. If you do not look after each other, who will look after you? Let him who would look after me look after one who is sick. If he has a preceptor, his preceptor should, as long as he lives, look after him until his recovery. His teacher, if he has one, should do likewise. Or his co-resident, or his pupil, or one who has the same preceptor, or one who has the same teacher. If he has none of these, the Community should look after him.”

*Truly, though, the Great Compassion is seen not so much in particular works as in the fact that our Teacher rose from his seat under the Bodhi tree where he had achieved his own liberation and then spent forty-five years of hardship travelling on foot through northern India teaching others. Here is a commentarial text on the Master’s wisdom and compassion:*

**3.10** Here the Master's possession of clear knowledge shows the greatness of wisdom, and his possession of conduct the greatness of compassion. It was through wisdom that the Exalted One reached the kingdom of Dhamma and through compassion that he became the bestower of the Dhamma. It was through wisdom that he felt revulsion for the round of rebirths, and through compassion that he bore it. It was through wisdom that he fully understood others' suffering, and through compassion that he undertook to counteract it. It was through wisdom that he was brought face to face with Nibbāna, and through compassion that he attained it. It was through wisdom that he himself crossed over, and through compassion that he brought others across. It was through wisdom that he perfected the Enlightened One's state, and through compassion that he perfected the Enlightened One's task.

Or it was through compassion that he faced the round of rebirths as a bodhisatta, and through wisdom that he took no delight in it. Likewise it was through compassion that he practised non-cruelty to others, and through wisdom that he was himself fearless of others. It was through compassion that he protected others to protect himself, and through wisdom that he protected himself to protect others. Likewise it was through compassion that he did not torment others, and through wisdom that he did not torment himself; so of the four types of persons beginning with the one who practises for his own welfare, he perfected the fourth and best type (who practises both for his own and other's welfare). Likewise it was through compassion that he became the world's helper, and through wisdom that he became his own helper. It was

through compassion that he had humility (as a bodhisatta), and through wisdom that he had dignity (as a Buddha). Likewise it was through compassion that he helped all beings as a father, while owing to the wisdom associated with it his mind remained detached from them all; and it was through wisdom that his mind remained detached from all things, while owing to the compassion associated with it he was helpful to all beings. For just as the Exalted One's compassion was devoid of sentimental affection or sorrow, so his wisdom was free from thoughts of "I" and "mine".

*To that Supremely Wise and Greatly Compassionate Lord who both understood the causes of our sufferings and used his skill in teaching Dhamma to relieve them, we make the triple prostration purifying mind, speech, and bodily actions.*

## SUGATO

Supremely Good in Presence  
and in Destiny

*The term Sugata suggests the idea of “auspicious” or “fortunate.” The word literally means “well-gone” and might be explained as “one who has gone to goodness” or “one whose going was good”. As such the term can be understood to refer either to the Buddha’s journeys in the world, which were always for the good of other beings, or to his attainment of Nibbāna, which was certainly the best of all destinations. The twofold meaning of the word accounts for the paraphrase rather than translation at the top of this section. The canonical texts include many stories of the journeys the Buddha undertook out of compassion for others: to see people in trouble, to comfort the sick, to teach Dhamma, to lead others to the attainment of the paths and fruits. Before we consider these, let us first look at the venerable Sāriputta’s reply to the questions of the wanderer Jambukhādaka, which will give us a clear idea of what the term “Sugata” meant to the Buddha’s original disciples.*

**4.1** “Indeed, revered Sāriputta, who in the world speak conforming to Dhamma? Who in the world have practised well? Who in the world are Sugatas?”

“Those in the world, your reverence, who teach Dhamma for the destruction of lust, aversion, and delusion, in the world they are Dhamma-speakers.

“Those in the world, your reverence, who are practising for the destruction of lust, aversion, and delusion, in the world they have practised well.

“Those, your reverence, whose lust, aversion, and delusion are destroyed, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, made unable to grow again in the future, of a nature not to arise again, in the world they are Sugatas.”

*The Buddha himself often praised being “like a palm-tree stump” and here he is said to be like that. Not what the worldly would call attractive, a lopped-off stump, but then worldly persons tend to value what the growing top of the palm represents: greed, hatred, and delusion. But the Buddha’s true disciples valued freedom from the fears that these states produced, and they praised the Sugata for having gone beyond them:*

- 4.2** A thousand bhikkhus, more than that,  
 pay homage to the Sugata  
 who teaches Dhamma stainless,  
 Nibbāna, freedom from all fear.  
 They hear the Dhamma’s great extent  
 by the perfect Buddha taught.  
 Truly the Buddha shines,  
 revered by the order of monks.  
 “Great One” the Lord is rightly named,  
 among sages the sage, who is seventh,  
 being now as a great cloud compared  
 on disciples of yours you rain down.  
 Leaving the day-abiding’s peace,  
 wishing for sight of the Teacher then,  
 Vaṅgīsa, your disciple bows down  
 to the Great Hero’s feet.

*The Sugata certainly led a large number of bhikkhus and bhikkhunis who spent time practising meditation in the forest—"the day-abiding's peace"—but he did not spend all his time there. From the Pali suttas we have no complete picture of how the Buddha's days were spent, though this must have varied greatly with the seasons and with his surroundings. The commentaries provide a generalised account of his day, which they divide into five segments.*

**4.3** Habits (or duties) are of two kinds, skilful and unskilful. Of these, the unskilful habits of the Exalted One had been extirpated by his attainment of Arahatsip at the time he sat cross-legged under the Bodhi tree. Skilful habits, however, remained to the Exalted One. These were fivefold: his before-the-meal duties (or habits), his after-the-meal duties, his duties in the first watch of the night, his duties in the middle watch of the night; and his duties in the last watch of the night.

His before-the-meal duties were as follows: the Exalted One used to rise up early, and out of consideration for his personal attendant and for the sake of bodily comfort, he would wash his face and otherwise care for his person. Then until it was time to go on alms round he would sit (meditating) in a quiet place. When it was time to go on alms round, having put on a (clean) under-robe and bound it on with the waistband, he put on his upper robe and took his bowl and then, sometimes alone and sometimes surrounded by a company of bhikkhus, he entered the village or town to collect alms, sometimes in an ordinary way and sometimes with many wonders happening ....

By these signs the people would know, "Today the Exalted One has come for alms." Then they, clad in their

best clothes, would take incense and flowers and other offerings, and leaving their houses, go out into the roads and with the incense, flowers and so on, and diligently pay homage and respect to the Exalted One. Having asked him: “Lord, please give us ten bhikkhus to feed,” “Give us twenty bhikkhus,” or “Please give us one hundred bhikkhus,” they would receive his bowl, spread a mat and diligently honour him by placing food in his bowl.

When he had finished his meal, the Exalted One, having looked into the hearts of the beings present there, would so teach Dhamma that some were established in the going-for-refuge, some in the five precepts, some in stream-entry, some in the fruits of once-returning and non-returning respectively, and some having gone forth would be established in the highest fruit of arahatship. Thus having compassion with the multitude, he would rise from his seat and return to the monastery.

On his arrival there, he would sit in a circular pavilion on the excellent Buddha-seat prepared for him, waiting for the bhikkhus to finish their meal. When the bhikkhus had finished their meal, the Exalted One’s personal attendant reported this to him. Then the Exalted One would enter the Fragrant Cell.

His before-the-meal duties lasted to this time.

Then the Exalted One, having finished the before-the-meal duties, washed his feet standing on the footboard and then sat down on the seat prepared by his personal attendant at (the entrance to) the Fragrant Cell and exhorted the Bhikkhu-sangha: “Bhikkhus, strive with heedfulness—it is difficult to find the arising of a Buddha in the world, it is difficult to obtain the state of human birth, it is difficult to get a fit opportunity, it is difficult to

gain the going-forth, it is difficult to get to hear of True Dhamma.” Then some would ask the Exalted One for a meditation subject and he would give a meditation subject according to character. Thereupon all of them would bow down to the Exalted One and go each one to their night and day quarters, some to the forest, some to the roots of trees, some to various hills and so on . . .

At this, the Exalted One, having entered the Fragrant Cell, would, if he wished, lie down for a while mindful and fully aware, on his right side after the manner of a lion. And secondly, his body being now refreshed, he would rise and look into the world (in meditation). And thirdly, the people of the village or the town near which he might be dwelling who had given food before the meal, would assemble after the meal (in the afternoon) at the monastery in their best clothes, bringing incense, flowers, and other offerings.

Then the Exalted One, when the assembly was complete, would approach in such a fit manner as was convincing; and taking his seat in the Dhamma-hall on the excellent Buddha-seat already prepared, he would teach Dhamma as suited to time and occasion. And when he perceived that it was time, he dismissed the assembly and the people would make obeisance to the Exalted One and then depart.

These were his after-the-meal duties.

When he had thus finished his after-the-meal duties, he would rise from the Buddha-seat, and if he desired to bathe, he would enter the bathhouse and cool his limbs with water made ready by his personal attendant. Then the personal attendant, having fetched the Buddha-seat, would prepare it in the separate Fragrant Cell, and the

Exalted One, having put on with two folds a reddish under-robe, would bind it on with the waistband, place the upper robe over one shoulder and having gone there, would sit down secluded for a short time. At this time the bhikkhus would come from here and there to attend on the Exalted One, and some of them would ask questions, some would ask for meditation subjects, and some would request to hear the Dhamma; and in granting the wishes of each one the Exalted One would complete the first watch of the night.

These were his duties in the first watch of the night.

When he had finished his duties in the first watch of the night and the bhikkhus had departed, the gods of the entire ten-thousand world system would gain an opportunity to approach the Exalted One to ask questions. The Exalted One in answering their questions would complete the middle watch of the night.

These were his duties in the middle watch of the night.

The last watch of the night he would divide into three parts, and as his body would be tired from so much sitting since before the meal, he would spend one part in pacing up and down to free himself of the discomfort. In the second part, having entered the Fragrant Cell, he would lie down mindful and fully aware, on his right side after the manner of a lion. In the third part he would rise and taking his seat, he would look over the world with the Buddha-eye in order to discover any person who under the previous Buddhas, with giving, moral conduct, and other meritorious conduct, had made a resolve that their merits should help towards some attainment or other. (This Buddha-eye is called elsewhere “the Net of Great Compassion.”)

These were his duties in the last watch of the night.

*After reading this we know that the Buddha not only travelled widely in the Ganges Valley, but also had much to do while seated, instructing all sorts of people as well as enjoying his regular periods of meditation. Some people must have thought his life an easy one, “sitting around doing nothing,” a complaint still voiced about meditators down to this day by the action-minded, but as we know he had an exhausting routine. An envious brahmin, perhaps suspecting the Buddha of a life of luxury, once insinuated that he spends his time lolling around on luxurious furnishings. The Buddha’s striking redefinition of “luxurious furniture” awakened this brahmin to what being a Sugata really means.*

**4.4** “Now, Master Gotama, as to those couches both high and broad, such as the sofa, the divan, together with their coverlets of goat’s hair, of diverse colours, white coverlets, woollen coverlets, embroidered with flowers, quilts of cotton wool, embroidered counterpanes and rugs furred on both sides, rugs furred on one side, coverlets gem-studded and of silk, and other luxurious furnishings—all such seats both high and low, doubtlessly the worthy Gotama can get as he pleases, can get them without toil and trouble.”

“Brahmin, as to all these things, indeed we who have gone forth get them hardly at all, and even if we get them they are not to be used.

“Now, brahmin, there are these three couches both high and broad, which I can get here and now as I please and without toil and trouble. What are the three? They are: the high broad celestial couch, the high broad sublime couch, and the high broad noble couch. These are the three couches I get here and now as I please and without toil and trouble.”

“Master Gotama, of what sort is that high broad celestial couch which the worthy Gotama gets here and now as he pleases without toil and trouble?”

“In this case, brahmin, when I am living in dependence on a certain village or city-suburb, I dress in the morning and taking bowl and upper robe I enter that village or suburb for alms. When I return from my alms round and have eaten my meal, I make for the edge of the forest. There I gather together whatever dry grasses and fallen leaves there are into one place and sit down cross-legged, holding my body straight and establishing alert mindfulness.

“Thus aloof from sense-desires, aloof from unskilful thoughts, I attain and abide in the *first concentration* having initial and sustained application of mind and being born of solitude, joy, and happiness. By quietening of initial and sustained application, the heart serene within and concentrated upon one point, without initial and sustained application of mind, born of collectedness, joy, and happiness, I attain and abide in the *second concentration*. By dispassion towards joy I dwell with equanimity, mindful, clearly comprehending, and with the body experience that happiness of which the Ariyas say, ‘One with equanimity and mindfulness dwells happily,’ and I attain and abide in the *third concentration*. By giving up happiness, by giving up sorrow, by the disappearance of former joys and anguish, I attain and abide in the *fourth concentration*, with neither sorrow nor happiness, completely pure, with equanimity and mindfulness. That, brahmin, is the high broad celestial couch which I get as I please without toil and trouble.

“Now, brahmin, when I have reached such a condition, if I pace up and down, at such time my pacing is to me celestial. If I stand, at such time my standing is to me celestial. If I sit, at such time my sitting is to me celestial. If I lie down, celestial is ‘the high broad couch’ I lie on. That, brahmin, is what I mean when I speak of ‘the high broad celestial couch’ which I get as I please without toil and trouble.”

“Wonderful, Master Gotama! Marvellous, Master Gotama! Who but the worthy Gotama could get such a high broad celestial couch just as he pleases, without toil and trouble? But, Master Gotama, what is that high broad sublime couch, which the worthy Gotama gets here and now as he pleases, without toil and trouble?”

“In this case, brahmin, when I am living in dependence on a certain village or city-suburb, I dress in the morning and taking bowl and upper robe, I enter that village or suburb for alms. When I return from my alms round and have eaten my meal, I make for the edge of the forest. There I gather together whatever dry grasses and fallen leaves there are into one place and sit down cross-legged, holding my body straight and establishing alert mindfulness. I abide suffusing one quarter (of the world) with a heart imbued with *loving kindness*, likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth quarter, and so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all sorts and conditions; I abide with a heart abundant, exalted, measureless in loving kindness, without hostility or ill will, extending over the all-encompassing world. And I abide suffusing one quarter with a heart imbued with *compassion*, likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth

quarter, and so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all sorts and conditions; I abide with a heart abundant, exalted, measureless in compassion, without hostility or ill will, extending over the all-encompassing world. And I abide suffusing one quarter with a heart imbued with *sympathetic joy*, likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth quarter, and so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all sorts and conditions; I abide with a heart abundant, exalted, measureless in sympathetic joy, without hostility or ill will, extending over the all-encompassing world. And I abide suffusing one quarter with a heart imbued with *equanimity*, likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth quarter, and so above, below, around and everywhere, and to all sorts and conditions; I abide with a heart abundant, exalted, measureless in equanimity, without hostility or ill will, extending over the all-encompassing world. That, brahmin, is the high broad sublime couch which I get as I please without toil or trouble.

“Now, brahmin, when I have reached such a condition, if I pace up and down, at such time my pacing is to me sublime. If I stand, at such time my standing is to me sublime. If I sit, at such time my sitting is to me sublime. If I lie down, sublime is ‘the high broad couch’ I lie on. That, brahmin, is what I mean when I speak of ‘the high broad sublime couch’ which I get as I please without toil and trouble.”

“Wonderful, Master Gotama! Marvellous, Master Gotama! Who but the worthy Gotama could get such a high broad sublime couch just as he pleases, without toil and trouble’? But, Master Gotama, what is that high broad

noble couch which the worthy Gotama gets here and now as he pleases, without toil and trouble?”

“In this case, brahmin, when I am living in dependence on a certain village or city-suburb, I dress in the morning and taking bowl and upper robe, I enter that village or suburb for alms. When I return from my alms round and have eaten my meal, I make for the edge of the forest. There I gather together whatever dry grasses and fallen leaves there are into one place and sit down cross-legged, holding my body straight and establishing alert mindfulness. I know this for certain: *Lust* is abandoned by me. It is cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, made such as not to grow again, unable to sprout again in future time. *Aversion* is abandoned by me. It is cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, made such as not to grow again, unable to sprout again in future time. *Delusion* is abandoned by me. It is cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, made such as not to grow again, unable to sprout again in future time. That, brahmin, is the high broad noble couch which I get as I please without toil and trouble.

“Now, brahmin, when I have reached such a condition, if I pace up and down, at such a time my pacing is to me noble. If I stand, at such a time my standing is to me noble. If I sit, at such a time my sitting is to me noble. If I lie down, noble is ‘the high broad couch’ I lie on. That, brahmin, is what I mean when I speak of ‘the high broad noble couch’ which I get as I please without toil and trouble.”

“Wonderful, Master Gotama! Marvellous, Master Gotama! Who but the worthy Gotama could get such a high broad noble couch just as he pleases, without toil

and trouble? Most excellent, Master Gotama, most excellent! Just as if a man were to set up what was thrown down, or were to reveal that which was hidden away, or were to point out the right road to him who had gone astray, or were to bring a lamp into the darkness so that they who have eyes could see external forms, even so Dhamma has been illumined in many a figure by the worthy Gotama. We go for refuge to the worthy Gotama, to Dhamma and to the Bhikkhu-sangha. May the worthy Gotama accept us as lay disciples from this day forth so long as life shall last, as they who have gone for refuge.”

*Not all those of high rank and caste had the same attitude as the brahmin in the above passage. Some, like the high-ranking brahmin named Caṅkī (pronounced “Chunkey”), thought that rather than waiting for the Sugata to go to them, they should go respectfully to greet him.*

**4.5** “Now, sirs, hear from me why it is proper for me to go to see Master Gotama, and why it is not proper for Master Gotama to come to see me. Sirs, the monk Gotama is well born on both sides, of pure maternal and paternal descent seven generations back, unassailable and impeccable in respect of birth. Since this is so, sirs, it is not proper for Master Gotama to come to see me; rather, it is proper for me to go to see Master Gotama. Sirs, the monk Gotama went forth abandoning much gold and bullion stored away in vaults and depositories. Sirs, the monk Gotama went forth from the home life into homelessness while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life. Sirs, the monk Gotama shaved off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home life

into homelessness though his mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces. Sirs, the monk Gotama is handsome, comely, and graceful, possessing supreme beauty of complexion, with sublime beauty and sublime presence, remarkable to behold. Sirs, the monk Gotama is virtuous, with noble virtue, with wholesome virtue, possessing wholesome virtue.

“Sirs, the monk Gotama is a good speaker with a good delivery; he speaks words that are courteous, distinct, flawless, and communicate the meaning. Sirs, the monk Gotama is a teacher of the teachers of many. Sirs, the monk Gotama is free from sensual lust and without personal vanity. Sirs, the monk Gotama holds the doctrine of the moral efficacy of action, the doctrine of the moral efficacy of deeds; he does not seek any harm for the line of brahmins. Sirs, the monk Gotama went forth from an aristocratic family, from one of the original noble families. Sirs, the monk Gotama went forth from a rich family, from a family of great wealth and great possessions. Sirs, people come from remote kingdoms and remote districts to question the monk Gotama.

“Sirs, many thousands of deities have gone for refuge for life to the monk Gotama. Sirs, a good report of the monk Gotama has been spread to this effect, ‘That Blessed One is accomplished, fully enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and men, enlightened, blessed.’

“Sirs, the monk Gotama possesses the thirty-two marks of a Great Man. Sirs, King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha and his wife and children have gone for refuge for life to the monk Gotama. Sirs, King Pasenadi of Kosala

and his wife and children have gone for refuge for life to the monk Gotama. Sirs, the brahmin Pokkharasāti and his wife and children have gone for refuge for life to the monk Gotama.

“Sirs, the monk Gotama has arrived at Opasāda and is living at Opasāda in the Gods’ Grove, the Sāla-tree Grove to the north of Opasāda. Now, any monks or brahmins that come to our town are our guests, and guests should be honoured, respected, revered, and venerated by us. Since the monk Gotama has arrived at Opasāda, he is our guest, and as our guest should be honoured, respected, revered, and venerated by us. Since this is so, sirs, it is not proper for Master Gotama to come to see me; rather, it is proper for me to go to see Master Gotama.

“Sirs, this much is the praise of Master Gotama that I have learned, but the praise of Master Gotama is not limited to that, for the praise of Master Gotama is immeasurable. Since Master Gotama possesses each one of these factors, it is not proper for him to come to see me; rather, it is proper for me to go to see Master Gotama. Therefore, sirs, let all of us go to see the monk Gotama.”

*The Sugata, out of compassion for people afflicted with suffering, would go to release them from their torments. Here an outcaste sweeper named Sunīta describes his meeting with the Buddha, who passed him at his workplace while going on alms round.*

**4.6** Humble the clan in which I was born,  
 poor and having little food,  
 lowly the work I had to do—  
 I threw away the flowers.

I was despised by men,  
 disregarded, reviled by them,  
 so making my mind humble,  
 respectful was I to many folk.

Then I saw the All-Enlightened One,  
 revered and leading the monks' order,  
 the Great Hero, as he was entering  
 the chief city of the Magadhese.

Laying down my carrying pole,  
 I approached to honour him,  
 out of compassion just for me  
 the Best-among-men stood still.

Having honoured the Teacher's feet,  
 then standing near at hand,  
 I requested the Going-forth  
 from the Best-of-beings-all.

Then the Teacher compassionate,  
 compassionate with all the world,  
 spoke these words to me, "Come, monk,"  
 and that was my ordination.

*Both by the outcaste and the high caste was the Sugata  
 praised, and all were alike when ordained; they lost all marks  
 of caste when becoming the Buddha's disciples. Here is Sela,  
 a brahmin teacher, praising the Sugata's majesty:*

- 4.7 O You of perfect form and beauty rare,  
       proportioned well and lovely to behold,  
       in colour like fine gold, with shining teeth.  
 You, the Exalted, Energetic One,

Whose body shows forth all the minor marks  
 distinguishing a well-proportioned man,  
 while all upon your body can be seen  
 the signs peculiar to the superman.

You with eyes so clear, so fair your countenance,  
 and you so tall, so straight, majestic,  
 amidst the order of the samaṇas  
 do blazon forth as does the sun on high.

O You a bhikkhu good to gaze upon,  
 having a skin resembling finest gold,  
 what is this life of samaṇas to you,  
 having a presence so supremely fair?

You deserve to be a King who turns the Wheel  
 riding in state a chariot of war,  
 Lord of the earth from end to end foursquare,  
 a Conqueror of Jambudīpa chief.

Nobles and wealthy lords your vassals be,  
 You sovereign Lord of lords,  
 You King of men,  
 take then your power, O Gotama, and reign.

*The Sugata's final "going" will be the subject of the final three quotations. Here Vacchagotta, a wanderer, has questioned the Buddha about whether a Tathāgata, an Enlightened One, exists after death, does not exist, both exists and does not exist, or neither exists nor does not exist:*

**4.8** "How do you conceive this, Vaccha: suppose a fire was burning before you, would you know, 'This fire is burning before me'?"

"I should, venerable sir."

“If someone asked you thus, Vaccha, ‘What does this fire burning before you burn dependent on?’ what would you answer?”

“Master Gotama, I should answer, ‘This fire burning before me burns dependent on grass and sticks’.” “If that fire before you were extinguished, would you know thus, ‘This fire before me is extinguished?’” “I should, venerable sir.”

“If someone asked you, ‘Which direction has that fire which is extinguished gone in: the east, west, north, or south,’ what would you answer?”

“That does not apply, Master Gotama. The fire burnt owing to the grass and sticks (it had to cling to) as fuel; when they are finished and it has no nutriment, because it has no more fuel, it is reckoned as ‘extinguished’.”

*This famous simile of the fire gone out (where does a fire go when it has gone out?) has provoked a good deal of speculation in the Buddhist world. However, it is followed by the passage below which shows how “hard to fathom” is the Tathāgata:*

**4.9** “When describing the Tathāgata, the form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness by which he could be described—those have been abandoned by the Tathāgata, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done away with, so that they are no more liable to future arising. A Tathāgata is liberated from reckonings in terms of form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness; he is profound, immeasurable, as hard to fathom as the ocean. The term ‘arises’ does not apply, the term ‘does not arise’ does not apply, the term ‘both

arises and does not arise’ does not apply, the term ‘neither arises nor does not arise’ does not apply.”

*The simile of the going out of a flame reappears in a verse dialogue between Upasiva, a brahmin student, and the Buddha:*

**4.10** B: “Just as a flame blown out then disappears,  
one cannot calculate what is its state;  
the Sage too disappears from the mind-body,  
one cannot calculate what is his state.”

U: “Does one not exist who has reached the goal?  
Or does one dwell forever free from ill?  
O Sage, do well declare this unto me,  
for certainly this Dhamma is known to you.”

B: “Of one who has reached the goal no measure  
is found,  
There is not that by which he could be named.  
When for that one all dhammas are destroyed,  
destroyed are all the ways of telling too.”

*To that One whose going was always guided by compassion for others’ welfare, and whose final “going” has shown the way beyond birth and death, we bow down to that Sugata.*

5  
LOKAVIDŪ

Knower of the Worlds

*He has awakened to the true nature of all worlds in three different but related meanings. First, he is the knower of the world of conditioned things, the states of mind and how they work, the fruits of good and evil kammās and so on, together with material things. Then, he is knower of the sentient world, the states of existence produced by those kammās, usually listed as five or six realms of experience. Last, he knows the exterior world, for he taught that the earth was not the centre of the universe but only one among many worlds inhabited by living beings. This knowing was part of his enlightenment-knowledge, as we see from the text below, an incident following upon the Great Awakening under the Bodhi tree:*

**5.1** At the end of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, the Blessed One surveyed the world with the eye of an Enlightened One. As he did so he saw creatures burning with the many fires and consumed with the many fevers born of lust, of hate, and of delusion. Knowing the meaning of this, he then uttered this exclamation:

“This world is anguished, is exposed to contact,  
For what the world calls self in fact is ill;  
No matter upon what it does conceive  
(conceits of self),  
The fact is ever other than that  
(which it conceives).

The world, whose being is always to be other,  
 Is committed to, exposed to, relishes only being,  
 Yet what it relishes brings fear, and what it  
 fears is pain.  
 Now, this holy life is lived to abandon suffering.”

*When he saw the confusion in the minds of people, at first he hesitated to teach, doubtful that anyone would listen and understand. However, it is said that a high divinity, Brahmā Sahampati, requested him to teach Dhamma, assuring him that some would surely understand:*

5.2 The Blessed One listened to Brahmā Sahampati’s pleading. Out of compassion for beings he surveyed the world with the eye of an Enlightened One. Just as in a pond of blue, red, or white lotuses, some lotuses that are born and grow in the water thrive immersed in the water without coming up out of it, and some other lotuses that are born and grow in the water rest on the water’s surface, and some other lotuses that are born and grow in the water come right up out of the water and stand clear, unwetted by it, so too he saw beings with little dust on their eyes and with much dust on their eyes, with keen faculties and dull faculties, with good qualities and bad qualities, easy to teach and hard to teach, and some who dwelt seeing fear in the other world and blame as well.

*Besides knowing the world of human beings thus, the Buddha’s knowledge extended to all the various states of existence, and of course to the unconditioned beyond being:*

5.3 “Sāriputta, there are these five destinations. What are the five? Hell, the animal womb, the realm of ghosts, human beings, and gods.

(1) “I understand hell; and the path and the way leading to hell, whereon he who has entered will, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell; that too I understand.

(2) “I understand the animal womb; and the path and the way leading to the animal womb, where he who has entered will, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in the animal womb; that too I understand.

(3) “I understand the realm of ghosts; and the path and the way leading to the realm of ghosts, whereon he who has entered will, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in the realm of ghosts; that too I understand.

(4) “I understand human beings; and the path and the way leading to the human world, whereon he who has entered will, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear among human beings; that too I understand.

(5) “I understand the gods; and the path and the way leading to the world of gods, whereon he who has entered will, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, in the heavenly world; that too I understand.

(6) “I understand Nibbāna; and the path and the way leading to Nibbāna, whereon he who has entered will, by realisation himself with direct knowledge, here and now enter upon and abide in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by understanding that are taint-free with the destruction of the taints; that too I understand.”

*The Buddha’s wonderful knowledge of these states and how they come about must greatly broaden our understanding of the world. He has seen the extent of saṃsāra, where it is possible to go and how to get there. He has known all the*

*dukkha—the suffering and imperfection—inherent in this round of rebirth, even among the gods, for it is all impermanent and passes away. And he has seen the way out of it all, the blessed peace of Nibbāna. If we want to be born again we shall have to make good kamma to gain rebirth as a human or a god, but if we are tired of all that and can let go, then we shall see this impermanence everywhere, in everything, in all worlds and rebirths, in every state of mind:*

5.4 At one time the venerable Ānanda approached the Exalted One. Having drawn near and bowed down, he sat down to one side. Sitting there, the venerable Ānanda said this to the Exalted One: “Lord, they say ‘the world, the world.’ In what sense, Lord, is it called the world?”

“Whatever is of the nature to be worn away (*palokita*), Ānanda, this is called the world (*loka*) in the Noble Discipline. Now, what is of a nature to be worn away? The eye, Ānanda, is of the nature to be worn away, forms are of the nature to be worn away, eye-consciousness is of the nature to be worn away, eye-contact is of the nature to be worn away, also whatever is felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with eye-contact for its indispensable condition, that too is of the nature to be worn away.

“The ear ... sounds ... ear-consciousness ... ear-contact, also whatever is felt ... that too is of the nature to be worn away.

“The nose ... smells ... nose-consciousness ... nose-contact, also whatever is felt ... that too is of the nature to be worn away.

“The tongue ... tastes ... tongue-consciousness ... tongue-contact, also whatever is felt ... that too is of the nature to be worn away.

“The body, Ānanda, is of the nature to be worn away, touches are of the nature to be worn away, body-consciousness is of the nature to be worn away, body-contact is of the nature to be worn away, also whatever is felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with body-contact for its indispensable condition, that too is of the nature to be worn away.

“The mind, Ānanda, is of the nature to be worn away, mind-objects are of the nature to be worn away, mind-consciousness is of the nature to be worn away, mind-contact is of the nature to be worn away, also whatever is felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with mind-contact for its indispensable condition, that too is of the nature to be worn away.”

*Wherever one goes, one will find the same world being worn away and dissolved, even in the most remote galaxies. By going or travelling, one cannot reach the end of the world, yet the end of the world has to be reached to make an end of suffering. That is not far away, but in this very body, if we will make the effort to see it:*

5.5 “Is it possible, Lord, that by going one can know, see, or reach that end of the world where there is neither birth, nor ageing, nor death, nor passing away, nor re-arising?”

“It is not possible, I declare, friend, that by going one can know, see, or reach that end of the world where there is neither birth, nor ageing, nor death, nor passing away, nor re-arising . . . .

“Indeed, friend, so do I declare. But I do not say that one can make an end of suffering without having reached the end of the world. And I further proclaim that in this very fathom-long body with its perceptions and thoughts,

there is the world, the world's origin, the world's cessation, and the path leading to the world's cessation.”

*The Buddha has so praised mindfulness applied to the body since this can lead us to know what he understood about the world. What he knew may sometimes seem distant and far from the concerns of the life we live now, but it is not really so, for this mind and body point to the nature of Dhamma all the time. Now, we come to another passage on the Buddha and the world which connects with the one above. We can notice in both that the pattern of the Four Noble Truths is applied to the world instead of to suffering. We may draw our own conclusions about this:*

**5.6** “Bhikkhus, the world is fully comprehended by the Tathāgata; from the world the Tathāgata is released. The origin of the world is fully comprehended by the Tathāgata; the origin of the world is abandoned by the Tathāgata. The cessation of the world is fully comprehended by the Tathāgata; the cessation of the world is realised by the Tathāgata. The practice-path leading to the cessation of the world is fully comprehended by the Tathāgata; the practice-path leading to the cessation of the world has been developed by the Tathāgata.

“Bhikkhus, whatever in the whole world is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, searched into, and pondered over by mind in this world with its gods, Māras and Brahmās, this generation with its monks and brahmins, with its princes and men—all that is fully comprehended by the Tathāgata. That is why he is called ‘Tathāgata.’

“Bhikkhus, in the whole world with its gods, Māras and Brahmās, this generation with its monks and brahmins, with its princes and men, the Tathāgata is the Conqueror, the

Unconquered, the one who sees surely, the one having the highest power. Therefore he is called ‘Tathāgata’.”

*The world-condition mentioned in the following passage is the state of all beings in the world. For human beings, existence, or the world, consists of the five aggregates. One cannot speak of “world” or “existence in the world” apart from them. They are a source of either bondage or liberation depending on how they are viewed, so when the World-knower speaks to us about them we should listen. The Buddha is as a lotus; though rooted in the mud of this world and supported by it, he rises above it completely free from stain:*

5.7 “There is, bhikkhus, in the world a world-condition which the Tathāgata has awakened to fully, which he fully understands. So awakening and understanding, he announces it, points it out, declares, establishes and reveals it, expounds, explains, and clarifies it. And what in the world is the world-condition which the Tathāgata has awakened to fully, which he fully understands? The body, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness in the world is that world-condition which the Tathāgata has awakened to fully, understood fully.

“And whosoever when this is being announced, pointed out, declared, established and revealed, explained, and clarified by the Tathāgata, does not understand, does not see, such a foolish ordinary man, blind, without vision, not understanding, not seeing, for him I can do nothing.

“Just as a water lily, blue, red, or white, though born in the water, grown up in the water, when it reaches the surface stands there unsoiled by the water, even so, bhikkhus, though born in the world, grown up in the world, having conquered the world, the Tathāgata lives unsoiled by the world.”

*The truths about this world-condition do not suddenly become truths when a Buddha appears and fade to falsehood as his teaching is lost. There are certain truths that are always truths in every land, every time, every world, every aeon, every galaxy wherever there are beings. These truths include the Four Noble Truths and the three marks or characteristics of existence:*

**5.8** “Bhikkhus, whether there is the appearance of Tathāgatas or there is not the appearance of Tathāgatas, there is this established condition of Dhamma, this fixed law of Dhamma: All that is conditioned is impermanent. That a Tathāgata has fully awakened to; he fully understands. So awakened and understanding he announces it, points it out, declares, establishes, expounds, explains, and clarifies that, ‘All that is conditioned is impermanent.’

“Whether there is the appearance of Tathāgatas or not, there is this established condition of Dhamma, this fixed law of Dhamma: All that is conditioned is suffering. That a Tathāgata has fully awakened to; he fully understands. So awakened and understanding he announces it, points it out, declares, establishes, expounds, explains, and clarifies that, ‘All that is conditioned is suffering.’

“Whether there is the appearance of Tathāgatas or not, there is this established condition of Dhamma, this fixed law of Dhamma: All phenomena are not self. That a Tathāgata has fully awakened to; he fully understands. So awakened and understanding he announces it, points it out, declares, establishes, expounds, explains, and clarifies that, ‘All phenomena are not self.’”

*Before his Enlightenment, as a prince the future Buddha had known the ultimate in gratification in the human world; later as the ascetic Gotama he had found the most subtle enjoyments of meditation, so he knew all about pleasure, happiness and bliss. It is sometimes thought that he did not recognise any joy because of his teaching about the Four Noble Truths, but this is not so. The Four Noble Truths do not deny that there is pleasure in our ordinary unreflective life, but they point out that this pleasure is impermanent and unsubstantial and therefore unsatisfactory. The ascetic Gotama found the danger and misery in the world during his six years practice of austerities, when he tried out all means of mortifying the body before recognising them as fruitless. Escape from the world is, of course, Enlightenment or Nibbāna.*

**5.9** “I went in search of gratification in the world, monks. What there is of gratification in the world, that I have found; and in how far there is gratification in the world, I have clearly seen by wisdom.

“I went in search of danger in the world, monks. What there is of danger in the world, that I have found; and in how far there is danger in the world, that I have clearly seen by wisdom.

“I went in search of an escape from the world, monks. That escape from the world I have found; and in how far there is an escape from the world, that I have clearly seen by wisdom.”

*To that One who has found the way out of all births and sufferings, who has known the end of all worlds and helped great multitudes of beings beyond all births, sufferings, and worlds, we who are mired in this world of sorrows bow down.*

## ANUTTARO PURISADAMMA-SĀRATHĪ

## Incomparable Master of Those to be Tamed

*The Buddha tamed himself first, thus he became the incomparable tamer of others. Having tamed himself, at first he thought he should live under the guidance of another, or at least should venerate someone else, but he found that the Dhamma alone deserved his veneration:*

**6.1** Now, while the Blessed One was alone in retreat this thought arose in him: “He lives unhappily who has nothing to venerate and obey. But what monk or brahmin is there under whom I could live, honouring and respecting him?”

Then he thought: “I could live under another monk or brahmin, honouring and respecting him, in order to perfect an unperfected code of virtue or code of concentration or code of understanding or code of deliverance or code of knowledge and vision of deliverance. But I do not see in this world with its deities, its Māras and its Divinities, in this generation with its monks and brahmins, with its princes and men, any monk or brahmin in whom these things are more perfected than in myself under whom I could live, honouring and respecting him. But there is this Dhamma discovered by me—suppose I lived under that, honouring and respecting that.”

Then Brahmā Sahampati became aware in his mind of the thought in the Blessed One’s mind. He appeared before the Blessed One and said: “Lord, it is good. The

Blessed Ones in past ages, accomplished and fully enlightened, lived under the Dhamma honouring and respecting that. And those in future ages will do so too.”

*It is the nature of Buddhas to respect the Dhamma, they all do so, all who are enlightened. Then what should we do, we who have not yet reached freedom?*

**6.2** The Buddhas of the time gone past,  
 The Buddhas of the time to come,  
 That Buddha of the present time,  
 Slayers of sorrow for many folk,  
 All lived revering Dhamma true,  
 As lived the Buddha Gotama,  
 And so shall live in future time,  
 Of Buddhas this the nature true.  
 Therefore who truly love themselves,  
 Wishing in greatness to grow themselves,  
 Should reverence the Dhamma true,  
 Recollecting the Buddha-word.

*The Buddha could only tame those people who had planted the seeds of Dhamma in their hearts, but the methods he employed for taming people varied according to their character and situation. Here he explains the broad principles of this training:*

**6.3** At one time the Exalted One was staying near Sāvatti near Jeta Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park. Now, Kesi the horse-trainer came to visit the Exalted One, and on coming to him he bowed down and sat down to one side. As he sat thus, the Exalted One said this to Kesi the horse-trainer: “You yourself, Kesi, are a trained man, a master of horses to be tamed. Now, Kesi, how do you train a horse to be tamed?”

“As for me, your reverence, I train a horse to be tamed by mildness, also by harshness, also by both mildness and harshness.”

“But supposing, Kesi, that a horse to be tamed does not submit to your training by mildness, nor to the training by harshness, nor yet to the training by both mildness and harshness, what do you do?”

“In such a case, your reverence, I destroy him. Why so? With the idea: Let him not be a discredit to my teacher’s clan. However, your reverence, the Exalted One is an incomparable master of men to be tamed. How, your reverence, does the Exalted One train a man to be tamed?”

“For my part, Kesi, I too train a man to be tamed by mildness, also by harshness, also by both mildness and harshness. Kesi, this is the way of mildness, ‘Good conduct in body is like this, the result of good conduct in body is like this. Good conduct in speech is like this, the result of good conduct in speech is like this. Good conduct in mind is like this, the result of good conduct in mind is like this. The gods are like this, men are like this.’

“And this, Kesi, is the way by harshness, ‘Bad conduct in body is like this, the result of bad conduct in body is like this. Bad conduct in speech is like this, the result of bad conduct in speech is like this. Bad conduct in mind is like this, the result of bad conduct in mind is like this. Animal birth is like this, the realm of ghosts is like this.’

“And this, Kesi, is the way by both mildness and harshness, ‘Good conduct in body, speech, and mind is like this, and its result like this; bad conduct in body, speech, and mind is like this, and its result like this. Gods and men are like this, animal birth and the ghost-realm are like this.’”

“But, your reverence, if the man to be trained does not submit to the training by mildness, by harshness, by mildness and harshness, then what does the Exalted One do?”

“In such a case, Kesi, I destroy him.”

“But surely the Exalted One does not take life! And yet the Exalted One spoke thus: ‘I destroy him, Kesi.’”

“True it is, Kesi, that taking life is not fitting for the Tathāgata. Yet if a man to be trained does not submit to the training by mildness, by harshness, or by mildness and harshness, then the Tathāgata thinks it is not worthwhile to admonish that man, nor do intelligent fellow-monks in the holy life think it is worthwhile to admonish that man. This, Kesi, is destruction for a man in the Noble Discipline—when both the Tathāgata and fellow-monks in the holy life do not think it worthwhile to admonish him.”

*The Buddha tamed people with the Dhamma-Vinaya, his Doctrine and Discipline, in various ways, mostly gently but sometimes harshly. And people listened to that Dhamma and were trained by doing so:*

**6.4** “Bhikkhus, upon the manifestation of a Tathāgata, an Arahāt, a Perfectly Enlightened One, four wonderful and marvellous things are manifest. What are the four?”

“Bhikkhus, people find pleasure in attachments, take delight in attachments, and enjoy them. But when the Dhamma of non-attachment is taught by the Tathāgata, people are ready to hear it, they lend an ear, they apply their minds to it. This is the first wonderful and marvellous thing to appear on the manifestation of a Tathāgata, Arahāt, and Perfectly Enlightened One.

“Bhikkhus, people find pleasure in pride, take delight in pride, and enjoy it. But when the Dhamma for

abolishing pride is taught by the Tathāgata, people are ready to hear it, they lend an ear, they apply their minds to it. This is the second wonderful and marvellous thing to appear on the manifestation of a Tathāgata, Arahat and Perfectly Enlightened One.

“Bhikkhus, people find pleasure in (a life of) restlessness, take delight in restlessness, and enjoy it. But when the Dhamma of calm is taught by the Tathāgata, people are ready to hear it, they lend an ear, they apply their minds to it. This is the third wonderful and marvellous thing to appear on the manifestation of a Tathāgata, Arahat, and Perfectly Enlightened One.

“Bhikkhus, people have come to unknowing, have become blinded by unknowing and fettered by it. But when the Dhamma for the abolishing of unknowing is taught by the Tathāgata, people are ready to hear it, they lend an ear, they apply their minds to it. This is the fourth wonderful and marvellous thing to appear on the manifestation of a Tathāgata, Arahat, and Perfectly Enlightened One.

“These, bhikkhus, are the four wonderful and marvellous things which appear upon the manifestation of a Tathāgata, Arahat and Perfectly Enlightened One.”

*Now, we come to illustrate the Buddha's methods of training. The first dates from the Buddha's old age, when his scheming cousin, Devadatta, made three attempts to murder him. Only one incident is given here as a good example of how the Buddha's loving kindness was so strong that even those planning to kill him could not carry out their intentions:*

**6.5** Then Devadatta went to Prince Ajātasattu and said:  
“Sire, give such orders to your men that I may deprive

the Monk Gotama of life.” And Ajātasattu the Prince gave orders to his men: “Whatever the worthy Devadatta tells you to do, do just that.”

Then to one man Devadatta gave the command: “Go my friend, the Monk Gotama is staying at such and such a place. Kill him, and come back by this path.” Then on that path he placed two other men, telling them, “Whatever man you see coming along this path, kill him, and return by that path.” Then on that path he placed four other men (and so on up to sixteen men).

And that man took his sword and shield, and hung his bow and quiver at his back, and went to the place where the Exalted One was, and when he was at some little distance from the Exalted One, being terrified, anxious, excited, and alarmed, he stood stock still and stiff. When the Exalted One saw him like that, he said to the man: “Come here, friend, and do not be afraid.” Then that man laid aside his sword and his shield, took off his bow and his quiver, and went up to the Exalted One; and falling at his feet, he said to the Exalted One: “Lord, evil has overcome me according to my folly, my stupidity, my unrighteousness, in that I have come here with evil and murderous intent. May the Exalted One acknowledge the transgression as a transgression for the sake of restraint in the future.”

“Truly, my friend, evil has overcome you. But since, my friend, you look upon your transgression as transgression and duly make amends for it, we acknowledge it. For this, friend, is progress in the Discipline of the Noble Ones, that he who has seen his transgression to be transgression and confesses it according to the rule, he comes to restraint in the future.”

*Then the Buddha taught him the Dhamma, and at the conclusion of the Buddha's discourse the man became a stream-enterer. In this way the Buddha tamed even a potential murderer, and what greater taming could there be than that? The Buddha could tame not only those with gross defilements, but also those with more subtle faults, such as pride:*

**6.6** At one time at Sāvatti, there was a brahmin living called Mānathaddha (Pride-stiff). He showed respect neither to his mother, nor to his teacher, nor to his eldest brother. Now, at that time, the Exalted One, surrounded by a large assembly, was teaching Dhamma. And it occurred to brahmin Mānathaddha: "This Monk Gotama, surrounded by a large assembly, is teaching Dhamma. What if I were to draw near? If he will speak to me, I shall speak to him; but if he will not speak to me, I shall not speak to him." And Mānathaddha, thinking: "This Monk Gotama does not know anything," was about to turn back.

Then the Exalted One, knowing with his mind the mind of that brahmin, addressed him in a verse:

"Pride, O brahmin, is not good  
For anyone, brahmin, here in the world.  
What good did you come here for?  
That is what you should develop!"

Then Mānathaddha thought: "The Monk Gotama knows my thoughts!" and there and then he placed his head at the feet of the Exalted One, kissed the Lord's feet on all sides and with his hands stroked them all round, and made known his name: "Good Gotama, I am Mānathaddha; I am Mānathaddha, good Gotama!"

*And not only the violent and the proud did our Lord Buddha tame, but also the pitiful as this incident shows:*

**6.7** At one time the Exalted One was staying near Rājagaha, in the Bamboo Grove at the Squirrels' Feeding-ground. Now, at that time there was in Rājagaha a leper named Suppabuddha, a poor, miserable, wretched creature. And it happened at that time that the Exalted One was sitting in the midst of a great multitude teaching Dhamma. And Suppabuddha the leper saw from afar that multitude gathered together, and at the sight he thought: "Doubtless there is an alms-giving of food hard and soft over there. Suppose I draw near to yonder crowd, I might get something to eat, food hard or soft."

So Suppabuddha the leper drew near that crowd and he saw the Exalted One sitting there amid a great multitude, teaching Dhamma, and seeing it he thought: "No! there is no alms-giving here of food hard and soft. This is the Monk Gotama teaching Dhamma in the assembly. Suppose I listen to Dhamma." So he sat down to one side thinking: "I too shall listen to Dhamma."

Now, the Exalted One, grasping with his mind the thoughts of all that assembly, thought to himself: "I wonder who of those present is capable of understanding Dhamma?" And the Exalted One saw Suppabuddha the leper sitting in that assembly, and seeing him he thought: "This one here is capable of understanding Dhamma." So for the sake of Suppabuddha the leper, he gave a talk in progressive order, that is to say, on giving, on moral conduct, on heaven, on the danger, meanness, and corruption of the sensualities, and the advantage in renunciation. And when the Exalted One knew that the heart of Suppabuddha the leper was ready, softened, unbiased, elated, and believing, then he unfolded those Dhamma-teachings peculiar to the Buddhas: suffering, origin, cessation, and path.

Then just as a white cloth, free from stains, is ready to receive the dye, even so in Suppabuddha the leper, as he sat there in that very seat, arose the spotless and stainless vision of Dhamma: whatever has the nature to arise, all that has the nature to cease. And Suppabuddha the leper saw Dhamma, and understood Dhamma, plunged into Dhamma, crossed beyond doubt, was freed from perplexity, won confidence in the Teacher's Dispensation without relying on another. Then he rose from his seat, advanced to the Exalted One and on drawing near, bowed down to the Exalted One, and sat down to one side.

As he sat thus, Suppabuddha the leper exclaimed to the Exalted One: "Most excellent, Lord, most excellent! Just as if a man were to set up what was thrown down, or were to reveal that which was hidden away, or were to point out the right road to one who had gone astray, or were to bring a lamp into the darkness so that they who have eyes could see external forms, even so Dhamma has been illumined in many a figure by the Exalted One. I go for refuge to the Exalted One, to Dhamma, and to the Bhikkhu-saṅgha. May the Lord accept me as a lay disciple from this day forth so long as life shall last, as one who has gone for refuge."

*Due to the Buddha's compassion, Suppabuddha not only gained the path and fruit of stream-entry, but also, shortly afterwards, he gained a good rebirth. Quite different from this harmless leper was the violent robber Aṅgulimāla, who had killed almost a thousand people. Perhaps his taming, and that of the elephant Nālāgiri, are the best-known examples of the Buddha's powers as Incomparable Master of Those to be Tamed:*

**6.8** Now, the robber Aṅgulimāla saw from afar the Exalted One approaching. When he saw him, the

following thought occurred to him: “How wonderful! How marvellous! For many a time ten men, or twenty men, or thirty men, or forty men band themselves together and strike into this road, and all of them perish at my hands. But here is a monk approaching alone, without a single companion, as if he had conquered! Suppose now I were to deprive this monk of life.” So the robber *Āṅgulimāla* took sword and shield, girded himself with bow and quiver, and followed close behind the Exalted One.

Then the Exalted One effected such an exercise of psychic power that although the robber *Āṅgulimāla* hurried with all his might, and the Exalted One walked at his usual pace, the robber *Āṅgulimāla* was unable to catch up with the Exalted One. Then to the robber *Āṅgulimāla* occurred the following thought: “How wonderful! How marvellous! Formerly I have overtaken and caught an elephant, even while running; I have overtaken and caught a horse, even while running; I have overtaken and caught a deer, even while running. But although I am hurrying with all my might and this monk is walking at his usual pace, I am still unable to catch up with him.” Accordingly *Āṅgulimāla* stood still and said to the Exalted One, “Stand still, monk! Stand still, monk!”

“I stand still, *Āṅgulimāla*. Do you also stand still!” Then to the robber *Āṅgulimāla* occurred the following thought: “These monks, sons of the Sakyans, speak the truth, utter the truth. But this monk says, even in the act of walking, ‘I stand still, *Āṅgulimāla*. Do you also stand still!’ Suppose now I were to ask this monk a question.” Accordingly the robber *Āṅgulimāla* addressed the Exalted One with a stanza:

“While you are walking, monk,  
you say you have stopped;  
But now, when I have stopped,  
you say I have not stopped.  
I ask you now, O monk,  
what is the meaning of it;  
How is it you have stopped and I have not?”

“Aṅgulimāla, I have stopped forever,  
Forswearing violence to every living being;  
But you have no restraint for things that breathe,  
So that is why I’ve stopped and you have not.”

“Oh, at long last a sage revered by me,  
This monk appeared now in the great woods.  
Indeed, I will for long renounce all evil,  
Hearing your stanza showing the Dhamma.”

So saying, the bandit took his sword and weapons,  
And flung them in a gaping chasm’s pit;  
The bandit worshipped the Sublime One’s feet,  
And then and there asked for the Going-forth.

The Enlightened One, the Sage  
of Great Compassion,  
The Teacher of the world with all its gods,  
Addressed him with these words “Come, monk,”  
And that was how he came to be a monk.

*To that Incomparable Master who has tamed himself,  
we, who need to tame the wildness of our hearts, bow down  
and vow, “May we be tamed by following Dhamma, the way  
of your taming.”*

## SATTHĀ DEVA-MANUSSĀNAM

## Teacher of Devas and Humanity

*Here is a marvellous thing! It is usual for religious teachers to seek counsel or teaching from the devas, gods or angels, but this could never happen in the case of an Enlightened One. The gods are beings also caught in the round of rebirth out of which they had not found the way, so what good would it do to go to them with problems? The Buddha did not seek advice from human beings either; he relied solely on his knowledge of Dhamma, and because of this, gods and people came to him for advice and teaching:*

**7.1** At one time the Exalted One was staying near Vesali at Gotama Cetiya. Then the Exalted One addressed the bhikkhus, saying: “Bhikkhus.”

“Yes, Lord,” replied those bhikkhus to the Exalted One.

The Exalted One said: “Bhikkhus, indeed I teach Dhamma by direct knowledge, not without direct knowledge. I teach Dhamma that is based on causality, not without causality. I teach Dhamma with marvels, not without marvels. Since Dhamma is taught by direct knowledge, not without direct knowledge, Dhamma is taught based on causality, not without causality, Dhamma is taught with marvels, not without marvels, there is good reason for exhortation, good reason for instruction.

“Well may you be glad indeed! Well may you be joyful! Well may you be pleased, (thinking:) ‘A Buddha perfected by himself is the Exalted One! The Dhamma of

the Exalted One is well expounded! Well has the Sangha practised!”

*Here is a great cause for joy, for if we depend on the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, we have a refuge which cannot be blamed or controverted—only we must know what the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha are and how to practise correctly:*

7.2 “Bhikkhus, well expounded is the Dhamma of the Tathāgata. As to this, a monk, brahmin, god, Māra, Brahmā, or anyone in the world, might blame me, saying, ‘Indeed, Dhamma has not been well expounded by you.’ Bhikkhus, I see no grounds for showing that any monk or brahmin, god, Māra, or Brahmā, or anyone in the world, can with justice make this charge. Since I see no grounds for such a charge, I abide attained to peace, attained to fearlessness, attained to intrepidity.

“Bhikkhus, the practice-path going to Nibbāna has been well communicated to disciples by the Tathāgata, since my disciples who have practised accordingly, after destroying the taints, enter and abide in the untainted freedom of heart, freedom by wisdom, realising them here and now by their own super-knowledge. As to this, a monk, brahmin, god, Māra, Brahmā, or anyone in the world, might blame me, saying, ‘Indeed, the practice-path going to Nibbāna has not been well communicated to disciples by you, since your disciples have not practised accordingly, have not destroyed the taints and have not entered on and abode in the untainted freedom of heart, freedom by wisdom, realising them here and now by their own super-knowledge.’ Bhikkhus, I see no grounds for showing that any monk or brahmin, god, Māra, or

Brahmā, or anyone in the world, can with justice make this charge. Since I see no grounds for such a charge, I abide attained to peace, attained to fearlessness, attained to intrepidity.

“Bhikkhus, not only one hundred disciples among my assemblies, after destroying the taints enter and abide in the untainted freedom of heart, freedom by wisdom, realising them here and now by their own super-knowledge. As to this, a monk, brahmin, god, Māra, Brahmā, or anyone in the world, might blame me, saying, ‘Indeed, there are not hundreds of disciples among your assemblies, who, after destroying the taints enter and abide in the untainted freedom of heart, freedom by wisdom, realising them here and now by their own super-knowledge.’ Bhikkhus, I see no grounds for showing that any monk or brahmin, god, Māra, or Brahmā, or anyone in the world, can with justice make this charge. Since I see no grounds for such a charge, I abide attained to peace, attained to fearlessness, attained to intrepidity.”

*The more that we practise Dhamma, the nearer we grow to the peace, fearlessness, and intrepidity of the Buddha—and there is hardly anyone who would not value peace of mind and freedom from fear. Because of the Buddha’s peace, fearlessness, and intrepidity, he could teach all sorts of human beings, and celestial ones too. It was not always easy as the Buddha encountered strong opposition, especially from the brahmins, the religious functionaries of the Indian caste system. Here is a brahmin objecting and the Buddha refuting his objections:*

7.3 Once Saṅgārava the brahmin came to see the Blessed One and spoke to him thus:

“We are brahmins, master Gotama: we sacrifice and cause others to make sacrifices. Now, he who himself sacrifices and he who causes others to do so, both engage in a meritorious practice, the offering of sacrifice that extends to many persons. But one of this or that family, who goes forth from home into the homeless life, he tames himself alone, calms himself alone, leads to Nibbāna himself alone. If this is so, he then engages in a meritorious practice involving only one person, namely the act of going forth into the homeless life.”

“Well, brahmin, I shall ask you a question and you may answer as you think fit. Now, brahmin, what do you think of this? A Tathāgata appears in the world, an Arahat, fully awakened, endowed with supreme knowledge and virtuous conduct, sublime, knower of the worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and men, awakened, and blessed. He speaks thus, ‘Come! This is the way, this is the path treading which I comprehended and realised that highest consummation of the holy life which I now proclaim. Come! You too may practise thus, so that you too, by your own effort, may comprehend and realise this highest consummation of the holy life and abide in its attainment!’

“Thus this teacher shows the Dhamma and others too practise in that way. And of such who do so, there are many hundreds, many thousands, many hundreds of thousands. What do you think, brahmin: since this is so, is that act of going forth (into the monk’s life) a meritorious practice involving only one person or many people?”

“Since it is so, master Gotama, the going forth is a meritorious practice extending to many people.”

*Some people in our day too say that the Buddha was wrong to leave his home, family, wife and child, but they do not consider the immense benefits that have come to the world through his leaving home. Even his own family benefited (mostly by becoming Arahats!), so what can one say of the rest of humanity through 2500 years in multitudes of countries? The Wheel of Dhamma was turned to good purpose and is still turning:*

**7.4** “Bhikkhus, endowed in five ways a king turns the Wheel of State by Dhamma, and that wheel may not be turned back by any hostile son of man. In what five ways?

“As to this, bhikkhus, the king turning the Wheel of State, has knowledge of the good, has knowledge of Dhamma (the Law), has knowledge of amount, has knowledge of occasion, and has knowledge of the assembly.

“Bhikkhus, endowed in these five ways a king turns the Wheel of State by Dhamma, and that wheel may not be turned back by any hostile son of man.

“Even so, bhikkhus, endowed in five ways the Tathāgata, Arahat, Perfectly Enlightened One, by Dhamma turns the unsurpassed Wheel of Dhamma, and that wheel may not be turned back by a monk, brahmin, god, Māra, Brahmā, or by anyone in the world. In what five ways?

“As to this, bhikkhus, the Tathāgata, Arahat, Perfectly Enlightened One has knowledge of the good, has knowledge of Dhamma (the Four Noble Truths), has knowledge of amount, has knowledge of occasion, and has knowledge of the assembly.

“Truly, bhikkhus, endowed in these five ways the Tathāgata, Arahat, Perfectly Enlightened One, by

Dhamma turns the unsurpassed Wheel of Dhamma, and that wheel may not be turned back by a monk, brahmin, god, Māra, Brahmā, or by anyone in the world.”

*While he was alive, the Buddha’s Dhamma could not be stopped by anyone because he possessed these five knowledges. When these five are no longer found, as in some Buddhist lands and organisations today, then the Buddha’s teachings cannot endure even if backed by worldly power or wealth. The Wheel of Dhamma cannot be stopped by arguments, probably not even by persecution, but it stops of itself when no one practises Dhamma, or when practice goes the wrong way. The Buddha, our great Teacher, was discerning in the way he taught Dhamma, as the above passage and the following text indicate:*

7.5 At one time the Exalted One was staying at Nālandā in Pavārika Mango Grove. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman came to see the Exalted One. Coming to him, he bowed down and sat down to one side. When he was seated thus, he said to the Exalted One: “Lord, does not the Exalted One dwell in compassion for every living being?”

“Yes, headman, the Tathāgata does dwell in compassion for every living being.”

“But, Lord, does the Exalted One teach Dhamma in full to certain ones, but to certain others not teach Dhamma in full?”

“Now, headman, as to this I shall question you. Do you reply as you think fit. Now, what do you think, headman? Suppose a farmer here has three fields, one excellent, one moderate, and one poor, hard, salty, of bad soil. Now, what do you think, headman? When that farmer

wants to sow his seed, which field would he sow first, the excellent field, the moderate field, or the one that is poor, hard, salty and of bad soil?"

"Lord, that farmer wishing to sow his seed would sow first the excellent field, and having done that, he would sow the moderate one. Having done that, he might or might not sow that field that is poor, hard, salty, of bad soil. Why so? Because in any case it might do for cattle fodder."

"Well, headman, just like that excellent field are my bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. I teach them Dhamma excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent at the end, both its explained meaning and its literal one. I proclaim the holy life perfectly fulfilled in all its purity. Why is that? Headman, it is because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their stronghold, with me as their refuge.

"Then, headman, just like that moderate field are my men and women lay followers. I teach them Dhamma excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent at the end, both its explained meaning and its literal one. I proclaim the holy life perfectly fulfilled in all its purity. Why is that? Headman, it is because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their stronghold, with me as their refuge.

"Then, headman, just like that field that is poor, hard, salty, and of bad soil are monks and brahmins that hold views other than mine. To them also I teach Dhamma excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent at the end, both its explained meaning and its literal one. I proclaim the holy life perfectly fulfilled in all its purity. Why so? Because if they understand even a

single sentence of it, that would be for their welfare and happiness for many a long day.”

*That the Buddha taught Dhamma in different ways to different people is obvious from the suttas. He always taught out of compassion, but he used wisdom in selecting the topics of his discourse so that they fitted the needs of his listeners. That wisdom in selecting topics of Dhamma, or in replying to questions, was due to his penetration of the dhammadhātu, the “element of Dhamma.”*

7.6 “Lord, if learned nobles and learned brahmins, learned householders, and learned monks approach the Tathāgata and ask him a question constructed by them (with the idea of defeating him in debate), has the Exalted One already reflected on this in his mind, thinking, ‘Whoever, having approached me should question me like this, then asked thus, I shall answer them thus,’ or does the answer occur to the Tathāgata immediately?”

“Well then, prince, I shall ask you a question in return. As it pleases you, so you may answer. What do you think about this, prince? Are you skilled in the various parts of a chariot?”

“Yes, Lord, I am skilled in the various parts of a chariot.”

“What do you think about this, prince? If those who have approached you should ask thus, ‘What is the name of this particular part of the chariot?’ would you have reflected on this already in your mind, thinking, ‘If those who have approached me should ask me thus, then I shall answer them thus,’ or would the answer occur to you immediately?”

“Since, Lord, I am a renowned charioteer, skilled in the parts of a chariot, all the particular parts of a chariot

are fully known to me, so the answer would occur to me immediately.”

“Even so, prince, if learned nobles and learned brahmins, learned householders and learned monks approach the Tathāgata and ask him a question constructed by them, the answer occurs to the Tathāgata immediately. What is the reason for this? It is, prince, that the element of Dhamma is fully penetrated by the Tathāgata, and because of his full penetration of the element of Dhamma, the answer occurs to the Tathāgata immediately.”

*Here is a wonderful thing to recollect about our Teacher: he had no need to weigh pros and cons or try to work out what he would say or would not say. Dhamma just flowed naturally from him without the obstruction of the defilements. He was careful about teaching Dhamma as the following extract shows—and his care was rooted in respect for Dhamma:*

7.7 “Bhikkhus, in the evening the lion, the king of beasts, leaves his lair; he stretches himself; he looks around to the four quarters; three times he roars his lion’s roar, then he goes forth to hunt.

“Bhikkhus, if he strikes a blow at an elephant, truly he strikes with care, not without care; if he strikes a blow at a buffalo, an ox, a leopard, truly he strikes with care, not without care; if he strikes a blow at any small creature, even if it is only a hare or a cat, he strikes with care, not without care. What is the reason for this? He thinks, ‘Let not what is properly my power fail me!’

“A ‘lion,’ bhikkhus, that is a name for the Tathāgata, Arahāt, Perfectly Enlightened One. Truly, bhikkhus, when the Tathāgata teaches Dhamma in an assembly, that

is his lion's roar; and if he teaches Dhamma to the bhikkhus, he teaches with care, not without care; if he teaches Dhamma to the bhikkhunis, the men and women lay followers, he teaches with care, not without care; if the Tathāgata teaches Dhamma to the multitude, even when they are only fowlers who go about with grain (to snare birds), he teaches with care, not without care. What is the reason for this? Bhikkhus, the Tathāgata is filled with respect for Dhamma, he is filled with reverence for Dhamma.”

*The lion is the king of beasts by reason of his grandeur and strength, and to him is attributed care and accuracy in hunting, comparable with the care and accuracy with which the Buddha teaches Dhamma. The Buddha is called the dhammarājā, the king of Dhamma, and like worldly kings, he could be severe and even harsh in his teaching (see 6. 3). Some people to this day find the Buddha's open and direct words on impermanence and decay quite disturbing, as do the long-lived devas who imagine themselves secure for eternity in their celestial mansions:*

7.8 “Bhikkhus, in the evening the lion, the king of beasts, comes forth from his lair. Having come forth from his lair, he stretches himself, surveys the four quarters in all directions, and three times he roars his lion's roar. Then he goes forth in search of prey.

“Now, bhikkhus, whatever brute creatures hear the sound of the lion's roar, that king of beasts, for the most part they are afraid: they fall to quaking and trembling. Those that dwell in holes seek them; water dwellers make for the water; forest dwellers enter the forest; and birds mount into the air. Then, bhikkhus, whatever king's elephants, in village, town, or the king's palace, are

tethered with stout leather bonds, such burst and rend those bonds asunder, excrete dung and urine, and in panic run to and fro. Thus potent, bhikkhus, is the lion, the king of beasts, over brute creatures, of such mighty power and majesty is he.

“Just so, bhikkhus, when a Tathāgata arises in the world, an Arahāt, a Perfectly Enlightened One, complete in knowledge and conduct, one whose going is good, knower of the worlds, incomparable master of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and men, the Awake and Awakener, the Exalted One, he teaches Dhamma: such is personality, such is the origin of personality, such is the cessation of personality, such is the practice-path leading to the cessation of personality.

“Then, bhikkhus, whatsoever gods there be, long-lived, beautiful and become happy, for long established in lofty palaces, they too, on hearing the Dhamma-teaching of the Tathāgata, for the most part are afraid, they fall to quaking and trembling, saying, ‘It seems, sirs, that we who thought ourselves permanent are impermanent; that we who thought ourselves secure are insecure; that we who thought ourselves eternal are non-eternal. So it seems, sirs, that we are impermanent, insecure, non-eternal, and involved in personality.’ Thus potent, bhikkhus, is a Tathāgata over the world of gods and men, of such mighty power and majesty is he.”

When a Buddha, fully knowing,  
 Sets the Dhamma-wheel a-rolling—  
 Teacher he without a rival  
 In the world of gods and men—  
 He teaches that a person ceasing  
 Comes again to an arising;

And the Noble Eightfold Path  
Leading to suffering's calming.

Devas, they for ages living,  
Beauteous, of great renown,  
Like the beasts before the lion,  
Fall to fear and trembling:

“Not gone beyond personality!  
Transient, friends, they say, are we!”—  
When they hear the Arahat's words,  
Tathāgata, the One well freed.

*Not all the devas were so deluded and fearful. For example, Sakka, king of the gods, was a stream-enterer and therefore the Buddha's devoted disciple, who often came to visit him and ask questions on Dhamma. Here is an example to show the Buddha as Teacher of devas:*

**7.9** Sakka, king of the gods, having got a chance to speak, asked this first question: “Sir, what is the fetter whereby gods, humanity, demons, dragons, and celestial musicians together with other ordinary people, though they would live in friendship without ill will, violence, hostility, and enmity, yet live unfriendly, full of ill will, violence, hostility, and enmity?”

“That fetter is envy and avarice, O king of the gods.”

Delighting in and approving of the words of the Blessed One, Sakka was glad and said: “So it is, Lord, so it is, Sugata! Conquered are my doubts, gone my uncertainties after hearing the Lord's answer to my question.” Then Sakka asked a further question:

“Sir, what is the origin, what is the cause of envy and avarice? What gives birth to them, what gives them being?”

With what do envy and avarice exist, and without what do they not exist?”

“Their origin and cause, what gives birth to them, what gives them being, is that which is dear and not-dear. With that, envy and avarice exist; without that, they do not exist.”

“Sir, what is the origin, what is the cause of that which is dear and not-dear? With what do this dearness and not-deariness exist, and without what do they not exist?”

“Their origin and cause, what gives birth to them, what gives them being, is desire.”

And Sakka, king of the gods, delighting in and approving of the words of the Blessed One, addressed the Blessed One and said: “Passion, O Lord, is a disease, passion is a cancer, passion is a dart. Passion drags a man about from one existence to another, so that he finds himself now up above, then down below. These problems, O Lord, which were rankling in me for a long time, and to which other ascetics and brahmins have lent no ear, these the Blessed One has solved for me, and he has removed the dart of doubt and uncertainty.”

*Some of the devas had deep faith in the Buddha’s teachings and like Sakka had reached the paths and fruits, a more remarkable thing than their attainment by human beings. We have suffering to remind us of the Dhamma but the devas seldom have even a glimpse of it. Human beings are refreshed by the Buddha’s Dhamma as was, for instance, the brahmin Piṅgiyāni who spoke the following words:*

**7.10** “Just as a man, sir, well satisfied with some choice flavour, does not long for other flavours that are inferior, even so, sir, whenever one hears the revered

Gotama's Dhamma—whether the discourses, stanzas, questions-and-answers, or marvellous events—one does not long for the talk of others, of the multitudes of monks and brahmins.

“Just as a man, sir, overcome by hunger and weakness, might light upon a honey-cake and, whenever he tasted it, enjoy its sweet, delicious flavour, even so, sir, whenever one hears the revered Gotama's Dhamma ... one lights on joy, one lights on serenity of heart.

“Just as a man, sir, may come upon a log of yellow or red sandalwood, and wherever he smells it, at the root, in the middle, or at the top, he may find an exceedingly fair refreshing fragrance, even so, sir, whenever one hears the revered Gotama's Dhamma ... one finds joy, one finds happiness.

“Just as a clever physician, sir, might take away in an instant the disease of one who is sick and ailing, grievously ill, even so, sir, whenever one hears the revered Gotama's Dhamma ... sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are taken away.

“Just as a man, sir, overcome, overpowered by the heat of the hot season, exhausted, parched and thirsty, might come to a pool, clear, sweet, cool and limpid, with beautiful flights of steps down to it, and might plunge into it, bathe and drink in it, and allay all distress, exhaustion, and fever, even so, sir, whenever one hears the revered Gotama's Dhamma—whether the discourses, stanzas, questions-and-answers, or marvellous events—all distress, exhaustion and fever are wholly allayed.”

*Piṅgiyāni had the right kind of faith for he knew the purpose of Dhamma. He did not regard it, as the ignorant might, as a magical protection, nor in the traditional brahmin*

*light as a revelation from on high. He saw it as the way to be released from suffering. When time came for the Buddha to pass away, the devas caused all sorts of wonders to occur as their way of expressing appreciation of Dhamma and reverence to the Teacher. The Buddha, however, remarked that he was not best honoured in these ways but by practice:*

**7.11** And the Exalted One spoke to the venerable Ānanda, saying, “In full bloom, Ānanda, are the twin Sāla trees, yet it is not the season of flowering. And the blossoms rain upon the body of the Tathāgata and drop and scatter and are strewn upon it, in worship of the Tathāgata. And celestial coral-flowers and heavenly sandalwood powder from the sky rain down upon the body of the Tathāgata, and drop and scatter and are strewn upon it, in worship of the Tathāgata. And the sound of heavenly voices and heavenly instruments makes music in the air, out of reverence for the Tathāgata.

“Yet not thus, Ānanda, is the Tathāgata respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped, and honoured in the highest degree. But, Ānanda, whatever bhikkhu or bhikkhuni, man or woman lay follower, abides by Dhamma, lives uprightly in the Dhamma, practises in the way of the Dhamma, it is by such a one that the Tathāgata is respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped, and honoured in the highest degree. Therefore, Ānanda, abide by the Dhamma, live uprightly in the Dhamma, practise in the way of the Dhamma! Thus should you train yourselves.”

*To end this section here are some verses from the suttas praising the Teacher of devas and men:*

**7.12** By comprehending all the world  
in all the world just as it is,  
from all the world he is released,  
in all the world he clings to naught.

The Sage in all victorious,  
being freed from every bond,  
the Perfect Peace is reached by him—  
Nibbāna, where there is no fear.

The Buddha he, with no taints left,  
dangers gone, all doubts cut off,  
gained the state “all-kamma-crushed,”  
freed by the loss of life-supports.

Exalted One, the Buddha he,  
the Lion he is without compare;  
the world of devas and mankind  
for refuge to the Buddha gone,  
meeting they shall honour him  
the Mighty One of wisdom ripe:

“Tamed, of the tamed he is the chief,  
Calmed, of the calm he is the sage,  
Freed, of the free foremost is he,  
Crossed over, of them that crossed the best.”

So saying, we shall honour him,  
the Mighty One of wisdom ripe,  
in the world of devas and mankind  
none is there to equal Thee.

*To him then, we bow down with reverence and gratitude.*

## BUDDHO

## Awakened and Awakener

*The Buddha Gotama was not an isolated anomaly in history; he was one of a series of Enlightened Ones who from ancient times have through their Awakening shed light on human darkness. Although no other historical Buddha is known to us, that need not concern us overmuch, for all the Buddhas teach the same Dhamma. Invariably, the heart of their teaching, “the Dhamma special to the Buddhas,” is the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.*

**8.1** “Bhikkhus, it is just as if a person wandering through the jungle, the great forest, should see an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled by men of former times. And he should go along it and should see an ancient town, an ancient royal city, inhabited by men of former times, having parks, groves, ponds, and walls—a delightful place. And then that person should inform the king or the king’s chief minister, saying, ‘My lord, you should know that when wandering through the jungle, the great forest, I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled by men of former times. I went along it and saw an ancient town, an ancient royal city inhabited by men of former times, having parks, groves, ponds, and walls—a delightful place. Sire, rebuild that city.’ And then the king or the king’s chief minister rebuilt that city, so that in time it became rich, prosperous and well populated, expanded, and developed.

“So also, bhikkhus, have I seen an ancient path, an ancient road, travelled by Fully Enlightened Ones of former times. And what, bhikkhus, is that ancient path, that ancient road, travelled by Fully Enlightened Ones of former times? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

“This is that ancient path, that ancient road, travelled by Fully Enlightened Ones of former times, and going along it I came to know ageing-and-death, I came to know the origin of ageing-and-death, I came to know the cessation of ageing-and-death, I came to know the way leading to the cessation of ageing-and-death. Going along it I came to know birth ... becoming ... grasping ... craving ... feeling ... contact ... the six sense spheres ... mind and body ... consciousness ... volitional activities, I came to know the origin of volitional activities, I came to know the cessation of volitional activities, I came to know the way leading to the cessation of volitional activities.

“Having understood it I have taught it to the bhikkhus, the bhikkhunis, the male and female lay-followers, so that this holy life has become rich, prosperous and widespread, known to many, widely known, and announced by devas and men.”

*Bodhisattas practising the perfections take a long time to reach their goal; ordinary people wander about through many lives without a goal—and that will make their journey even longer—but wandering from life to life, with a goal or without one, is painful. Thus the wise endeavour in this very life to find the end of it all:*

**8.2** And the Exalted One addressed the bhikkhus, saying, “It is through not realising, bhikkhus, through not penetrating the Four Noble Truths, that this long course of births and deaths has been passed through and undergone by me as well as by you. What are these four? They are the noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the origin of suffering, the noble truth of the cessation of suffering, and the noble truth of the practice-path leading to the cessation of suffering. But now, bhikkhus, that these have been realised and penetrated, cut off is the craving for existence, exhausted is that which leads to renewed being, and there is no fresh becoming.”

This was said by the Exalted One. And the Sugata, the Master, further said:

“Caused by not Seeing four Noble Truths  
 according with reality—  
 long time the length of wandering  
 in various sorts of births.  
 Now that these four have been Seen,  
 so becoming’s support is severed,  
 and cut the root of suffering,  
 again-becoming is no more.”

*If we are to find the end then we shall need a systematic method of training. This the Buddha has set forth in the famous Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and here it is in brief:*

**8.3** At one time the Lord was staying at Uruvela on the bank of the river Nerañjarā beneath the Goatherd’s Banyan Tree, having just attained full Enlightenment. While thus alone and secluded this thought arose in the Lord’s mind:

“This is the sole way for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearing of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for realising Nibbāna, namely, the four foundations of mindfulness. What are the four? A bhikkhu should live practising body-contemplation on the body ... feeling-contemplation on feelings ... mind-contemplation on mind ... mind-object-contemplation on the objects of mind, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. This is the sole way ... the four foundations of mindfulness.”

*After that training, however long it takes, with the aid of the Buddha, the original Teacher, and one’s teacher in this life too, perhaps one will reach that purification and freedom proclaimed by the Buddha in the above sutta. When our Buddha had done that, he was able to declare, confidently and fearlessly:*

**8.4** “What must be known is directly known,  
 What must be grown is grown,  
 Let go is what must be let go,  
 And so I am the Awake.

So let your doubts about me cease  
 and let decision take their place,  
 for it is always hard to gain  
 sight of Awakened Ones.

I am one whose presence, brahmin,  
 is always hard for you to gain.  
 Here in the world I am the Awake  
 and the physician supreme.

Divine am I beyond compare,  
 and Māra's hordes have all been crushed,  
 I have subjected all my foes,  
 rejoicing without fear."

*"Enlightened" and "Awakened" are both possible translations of "Buddha," the root budh having the meaning of waking (still found in Slavic languages). Obviously the sound of such a word used in a spiritual sense would apply to only a few people, so that the appearance of a Buddha would be rare. It was uncommon even in India 2500 years ago when so many people practised some form of spiritual cultivation:*

8.5 "Do you say 'Enlightened One,' Keniya?"

"I say 'Enlightened One,' sir."

"Do you say 'Enlightened One,' Keniya?"

"I say 'Enlightened One,' sir."

Then it occurred to Sela of the brahmin caste: "This word 'Enlightened One' is hard to meet in the world. Now, the thirty-two marks of the Great Man have been handed down in our hymns, and the Great Man who is endowed with them has only two possible destinies, no other. If he lives the home life he becomes an ideal king, master of the four quarters, all-victorious, who has stabilised his country, and possesses seven treasures—he has these seven treasures: the wheel, the elephant, the horse, the jewel, the woman, the householder, and the steward treasure as the seventh. His children—who exceed a thousand, brave and heroic—crush the armies of others; over the earth bounded by this ocean he rules without a rod, without a weapon and in the Dhamma. But if he goes forth from the home life into homelessness,

he becomes an Arahat, a Fully Enlightened One, who draws aside the veil in the world.”

He said: “My good Keniya, where is the Master Gotama, Arahat and Fully Enlightened, living now?”

When this was said, the matted-hair ascetic Keniya extended his right arm and said: “There, where that green line (of trees) is, Master Sela.”

*In our days we do not have the possibility of walking over to the edge of the forest and meeting the Enlightened One; our only meeting with the Buddha must be within ourselves due to our devotion and purity of practice. But people of those times could meet the Buddha in person without necessarily understanding what or whom they had met:*

**8.6** At one time the Exalted One was travelling along the highroad between Ukkatṭhā and Setabbya. Now, the brahmin Dona was also travelling along the high road (with five hundred pupils) between Ukkatṭhā and Setabbya. Then the brahmin Dona saw in the footprint of the Exalted One the wheel-marks with their thousand spokes, with their rims and hubs and all their attributes complete. On seeing these, he thought thus: “It is indeed wonderful! It is indeed marvellous! These will not be the footprints of one in human form.”

Just then the Exalted One stepped aside from the highroad and sat down at the foot of a certain tree, sitting cross-legged, keeping his body erect and his mindfulness alert. Then the brahmin Dona, following the Exalted One’s footprints, saw the Exalted One seated at the foot of a certain tree. Seeing him handsome, faith-inspiring, with senses calmed, tranquil of heart, in the attainment of calmness by masterly control, like a tamed, alert, and

perfectly trained elephant, he approached the Exalted One and drawing near to him said this: “Your reverence will be a god?”

“No indeed, brahmin, I shall not be a god.”

“Then your reverence will be a celestial musician?”

“No indeed, brahmin, I shall not be a celestial musician.”

“Then your reverence will be a powerful spirit?”

“No indeed, brahmin, I shall not be a powerful spirit.”

“Then your reverence will be a human being?”

“No indeed, brahmin, I shall not be a human being.”

“When questioned in this way, ‘Your reverence will be a god, a celestial musician, a powerful spirit, a human being?’ you reply, ‘No indeed, brahmin, I shall not be a god, a celestial musician, a powerful spirit or a human being.’ Who, then, will your reverence be?”

“Brahmin, those taints with which, if not abandoned, I should be a god, those taints in me are abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, made nonexistent, of a nature not to arise again in future time. Those taints with which, if not abandoned, I should be a celestial musician, a powerful spirit, or a human being, those taints in me are abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, made non-existent, of a nature not to arise again in future time. Just as, brahmin, a lotus, blue, red, or white, though born in the water, grown up in the water, when it reaches the surface stands there unsoiled by the water, even so, brahmin, though born in the world, grown up ill the world, having conquered the world, I live unsoiled by the world. Brahmin, consider me as a Buddha.”

*The Buddha often spoke about “the sage” (muni) and also compared such a person to a lotus. The sacred lotus plant has a slippery covering which makes it impossible for water to spread over its leaves or flowers. Water forms rounded droplets like jewels in the centre of its leaves. That beautiful lotus—the Enlightened One—grows up from the mud of the world through the waters of the passions into the sunlight of wisdom, where his fragrant blossoms can be clearly seen:*

8.7 The Sage is unsupported everywhere,  
making neither “dear” nor those “undear”,  
sorrow then and meanness do not stain,  
as water settles not on (lotus) leaf.

As water-drop upon a lotus plant,  
as water does not stain a lotus bloom,  
even so the sage is never stained  
by what is seen and heard and sensed.

Certainly the wise man does not conceive  
by means of the seen, the heard and sensed  
nor by another’s (power) wish for purity,  
for such is unattached nor yet displeased.

*The Buddha liked to compose similes from the natural surroundings in which he spent most of his life. He was born as a prince in the grove at Lumbini, became enlightened under the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, taught Dhamma to his first five disciples in the Deer Park at Sarnath, and then attained final Nibbāna under the twin flowering Sāla trees outside Kusinārā. Lotuses are common in forest pools, while tamarind trees are abundant in the jungle. In the following simile we should remember that the tamarind tree has compound leaves*

*with many tiny leaflets, so it is quite easy to pick up a handful from the ground. In the trees above, a green mosaic of tiny leaves, countless in number, emphasises the point of this simile:*

**8.8** At one time the Blessed One was staying at Kosambī in a tamarind grove. Then the Blessed One, taking a few tamarind leaves in his hand, said to the monks: “What do you think, monks? Which are the more numerous, the few leaves I have here in my hand, or those on the trees of the grove?”

“Lord, the Blessed One is holding only a few leaves: those on the trees are far more numerous.”

“In the same way, monks, there are many more things that I have found out, but not revealed to you. What I have revealed is only a little. And why, monks, have I not revealed it? Because, monks, it is not related to the goal, it is not fundamental to the holy life, does not conduce to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, tranquillity, higher knowledge, enlightenment, or Nibbāna. That is why I have not revealed it.

“And what monks, have I revealed? What I have revealed is, ‘This is suffering, this is the arising of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, and this is the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.’ And why, monks, have I revealed it? Because this is related to the goal, is fundamental to the holy life, conduces to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, tranquillity, higher knowledge, enlightenment, and Nibbāna, therefore I have revealed it.

“Therefore, monks, your task is to learn, ‘This is suffering, this is the arising of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.’ That is your task.”

*Here are some verses from the Dhammapada to summarise what has been said so far about the Buddha:*

**8.9** Of paths the eightfold is the best,  
of truths the statements four;  
the passionless of teachings best,  
of humankind, the Seer.

This is the Path, no other’s there  
for purity of insight.  
Enter then upon this path,  
for this does muddle Māra.

Entered then upon this path,  
you’ll make an end of suffering.  
Freed in knowledge from suffering’s stings,  
by me the Path’s proclaimed.

Buddhas just proclaim the path,  
but you’re the ones to strive.  
Contemplatives who tread the path  
are freed from Māra’s bonds.

*To that Awakened One who awakens the multitudes,  
pointing the path for us to tread, we respectfully bow at his feet.*

## BHAGAVĀ

The Lord by Skilful Means  
Apportioning Dhamma

*“Bhagavā” is a word of such complex meaning that it seems best to understand it as summarising all the other virtues of the Buddha. This last chapter of our work begins with the verses of the layman Upāli, who uttered them extemporaneously as a garland of the Buddha’s glories when he was asked to name his teacher. In the verses the word “Bhagavā” has been translated as “Blessed”.*

**9.1** There is a Wise One who has cast off delusion,  
his heart’s wildernesses abandoned,  
his victors vanquished,  
He knows no anguish, he is quite even-minded,  
mature in virtue, with true understanding;  
He is beyond temptation, and he is stainless:  
Blessed is he, and I am his disciple.

He has done with questioning, abiding contented,  
He spurns what is worldly, the vessel  
of gladness;  
He has done the monk’s duty, his birth was human,  
he bears his last body in a male existence;  
He is utterly peerless, utterly spotless:  
Blessed is he, and I am his disciple.

He is undoubting, he is the most skilful,  
as the Discipliner, the Excellent Leader:

He has none to surpass his qualities all pure,  
with no hesitation, he is the Revealer;  
Conceit he has severed, he is the Hero;  
Blessed is he, and I am his disciple.

He leads the herds' leaders, he cannot be measured,  
his depths are unfathomed, attained to the Silence;  
Provider of safety, possessor of knowledge,  
in the True Dhamma standing, restrained in  
himself;

He has overcome passion, he is liberated:  
Blessed is he, and I am his disciple.

The Immaculate Tusker, who lives in remoteness  
with fetters all shattered, and liberated;  
He charms in discussion, is invested with wisdom,  
his banner is lowered, he knows no more lusting;  
He has done his subduing, has no diversifying:  
Blessed is he, and I am his disciple.

Of Sages the Seventh, with no schemes for deceiving  
with the triple True Knowledge, attained to  
Divineness;

He has done the Ablution, a master of oration,  
He knows tranquillisation, as the Finder of  
Knowledge

He is first of all givers, and he is able:  
Blessed is he, and I am his disciple.

He is Noble, and he is self-developed;  
he has gained his objective, he is the Expounder,  
He is mindful, and endowed with insight,  
and he is impartial, and unfastidious;

With no perturbation, of mastery Master:  
Blessed is he, and I am his disciple.

He has fared rightly, and practised meditation,  
inwardly unhaunted, in purity perfected;  
He is independent, and altogether fearless,  
living secluded, frequenting the summits;  
He has crossed over, and he shows us the crossing:  
Blessed is he, and I am his disciple.

Of surpassing serenity, with wide understanding,  
with great understanding, he has done with all  
lusting;

A Tathāgata Perfect, the Sugata, Well-gone,  
the Person Unrivalled, and likewise Unequaled;  
He is intrepid, (supreme in all) talents:  
Blessed is he and I am his disciple.

His craving is severed, he is enlightened  
and cleared of all clouding, completely untainted;  
To him gifts can be given, most mighty of spirits,  
most perfect of persons, inestimable;  
The greatest in grandeur, he has climbed to fame's  
summits:  
Blessed is he, and I am his disciple.

*Another eulogy spoken by the old brahmin Sabhiya, who had won Enlightenment with the Buddha's help, follows here:*

**9.2** O profoundly wise! One who's given up  
the three and sixty theses  
to which samanas attach amid their disputes,  
those words conceptualised and concepts on  
them founded,  
gone beyond these floods furthest end,

gone to dukkha's end, gone to the Further Shore.  
One Worthy, Perfectly Awakened,  
exhausted are your taints, so do I consider,  
brilliant and wise you are, of abundant wisdom.  
End-maker of dukkha, you have helped me  
cross—

my questions understood by you,  
you helped me cross my doubts, to you I bow,  
Sage who has practised in the silent ways,  
heart's wildness gone and gentle,  
O Kinsman of the Sun!

Whatever former doubts I had  
you have explained to me, O Seer,  
in truth you are a Sage Awake,  
no hindrances are left in you.  
Disturbance and all turbulence  
destroyed, dropped off for you,  
Cool become, the Tame attained,  
steadfast and striven to the Truth.  
With the Great Hero's words—  
who is the greatest of the great—  
all the gods agree, rejoice,  
and Nārada Sage and Pabbatā too.  
I bow to the thoroughbred 'mong men,  
to humanity's highest I bow down.  
In worlds together with their gods  
none is there comparable.  
You are the Awake, Teacher you are,  
the Sage overmastering Māra,  
underlying tendencies severed,  
crossed over, you help others to cross.  
Transcended are your 'assets',

and your taints destroyed,  
 fears abandoned, dangers gone:  
 a Lion who clings no more.  
 Like to a lovely lotus white  
 by water quite unstained,  
 so merit and evil, both of them,  
 never you can stain.  
 Hero, please stretch forth your feet.

*The Buddhist nuns have also paid tribute to the majesty of the Buddha, as illustrated by the following verses spoken by the Arahāt Therī Sundarī:*

- 9.3** See, Sundarī, the Master there  
 of golden form so fresh and fair,  
 the Tamer of those as yet untamed,  
 the Perfect Buddha, free from fear.
- See here Sundarī who comes,  
 completely freed and asset-free,  
 freed from lust and bondage,  
 taint-free, done what had to be done.
- Hither from Benares come,  
 have I drawn near to you,  
 Sundarī, disciple true,  
 worships the Great Hero's feet.
- You are the Awake, Master are you,  
 Brahmin, your daughter am I,  
 from out of your mouth truly born,  
 taint-free, done what had to be done.

*Another old brahmin, whose praises close the Sutta-nipāta, shows in his verses the deep devotion which was felt by enlightened disciples for their Master:*

**9.4** Going to Further Shore, I'll chant—  
 As he had seen, so did he teach,  
 That Pure One, that profoundly wise, that Lord  
 beyond pleasure and desire—  
 why then would he speak with falsity?

Now, therefore, I shall eulogise  
 those words profoundly beautiful  
 of one who has renounced the stains  
 of delusion, pride, hypocrisy.

All-seer, Awake, dispeller of dark,  
 Beyond all being gone, gone to world's end,  
 The one unpolluted, all suffering laid down,  
 Brahmin rightly named, 'tis him that I serve.

As bird that leaves behind a copse  
 might then in the fruit-filled forest live,  
 thus have I left them of wisdom lean,  
 just as a swan to a great lake arrived.

Those who explained to me before  
 I heard the Buddha's utterance,  
 saying "thus it was," "thus will be,"  
 all that was only oral lore,  
 all that to further conjectures led.

Dispeller of darkness, seated alone,  
 the well-born, him the maker of light,  
 Gotama, him profoundly wise,

Gotama, greatly intelligent,  
pointed out to me the Dhamma,  
which can be seen here and now  
and is not a matter of time,  
craving's exhaustion, troubles' end,  
with which there is naught to compare.

**9.5** Thus by his every footstep, by his every thought, by his every action, by his every approach and stay, wherever he stood or sat, he removed all dangers and turned all peace upon mortals, and brought them happiness of this world and beyond it, comforting all creatures. He is my very heart, my very eye, my only help, my only place of protection; to the Buddha should we go for Refuge, and say "I go for Refuge to the Buddha."

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AN= Aṅguttara Nikāya	Mv = Mahāvagga (Vinaya)
DN = Dīgha Nikāya	Sn = Suttanipāta
MN = Majjhima Nikāya	Th = Theragāthā
SN = Saṃyutta Nikāya	Th = Therigāthā.
Cv = Cullavagga (Vinaya)	Vism-ṭ = <i>Visuddhimagga</i>
Dhp = Dhammapada	Ṭīkā
It = Itivuttaka	Ud = Udāna

The reference numbers are to the book and discourse (e.g., MN 32); or to the group or book, discourse or chapter or section (e.g., SN 1:15 or Mv 1.3); or to the verse number (e.g., Dhp 1). References without a source are the author's translation. Translations from other sources have often been revised by the author.

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4. SN 35:191; *Samy. Anth.*, 3:57
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