

Irrigators regulate the waters;  
arrow-makers straighten the arrow shaft;  
carpenters shape the wood;  
the wise control themselves.

Verse.80, Dhammapada

6.Panditavagga (The Wise Man)

Dr. Ottara Nyana - Duncan Fyfe



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# The Ten Powers Of Buddha's Wisdom (DASA TATHĀGATA BALA ÑĀNA)



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**An abridgement and rendering into more modern English  
of the Ten Powers, from Chapter 16 of the 'Vibhanga',  
translated by Pathamakyaw Ashin Thittila (Setthila)  
as 'The Book of Analysis'**

**and**

**the associated commentary from the  
'Sammohavinodani', translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli  
as 'The Dispeller of Delusion'.**

**This is with the kind permission of the Pali Text Society,  
publishers of these two works.**



For  
Knowledge Lovers



There are beings with the little dust in their eyes, who, not hearing dhamma, are decaying, (but) if they are learners of dhamma, they will grow.

Lord Buddha, The Book of the Discipline, (MAHAVAGGA)  
Volume IV, Page 28





# INFORMATION

## Paragraph Numbers

The original paragraph numbers from the Pali Text Society translations are displayed in square parentheses at the end of each paragraph here to allow the reader to refer to these original works.

## Additional Detail

In the descriptions of the eighth and ninth power, the meanings are explained in detail in extracts from ‘The Essence of the Path of Purification’ by Dr Ottara Nyana, which is an abridged edition of Ven. Ñāṇamoli’s translation of the Visuddhimagga.

## Commentary

Commentary (or “Atthakatha” in Pāli) here means literally a commentary on the original Vibhanga Pāli Text, giving explanations of that text in various ways. The Pāli words from the Vibhanga are generally not listed in this present work in order to ease understanding.



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# PREFACE

As a young monk during the 1970s, I studied Vibhanga (The Book of Analysis) together with its commentary and sub-commentary under Abhidhamma scholars' guidance in Mahavisutarama, Pakhukku, Burma. Further, I lectured on Vibhanga to Abhidhamma students at the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, UK at the request of Duncan Fyfe during 2013 to 2015. Vibhanga is a set of analytical studies in Buddha's teachings, Khanda, Ayatana, Dhatu, Sacca and finally Dhammahadaya (the Heart of the Teaching) and especially Ten Powers of Lord Buddha's Wisdom. I think that Vibhanga will be useful to knowledge lovers if it is made more accessible. Therefore, we present this small book in a modern style.

## **Knowledges from the book**

### Chapter 1:

- Penetration Knowledge and Teaching Knowledge
- Ten Knowledges and views, together with reasons

### Chapter 2:

- Seven qualities of First Noble One
- Could a woman be a Buddha?
- Difference between wholesome and unwholesome kamma
- Three fields in World System
- Can a Buddha appear in another world system?
- Three kinds of disappearance
- Three kinds of images of complete Extinction
- Eight qualities of a Bodhisatta (i.e. a future Buddha)
- Could one change one's destination by kamma?

### Chapter 3:

- Four kinds of fortunate and unfortunate circumstances and their benefits
- Illustrations of kamma in accordance with Paṭisambhidā

#### Chapter 4:

- All destinies and their images

#### Chapter 5:

- Many and difference elements of the world

#### Chapter 6:

- Different dispositions of beings in different times

#### Chapter 7:

- Why Lord Buddha's teaching always helps other beings (because of knowing other beings' conditions – the inclination of beings, their latent tendency, disposition etc.)
- The world is eternal or not!
- The world is finite or not!
- A being exists after death or not!
- The present knowledge: The Improvement, the Deterioration of the Controlling Faculty is clearly explained in Vibhanga and in its Commentary

#### Chapter 8:

- Certain Jhānic practitioners and attainments
- Eight types of release
- Different types of concentrations and attainments

#### Chapter 9

- Six kinds of recollection of past life
- The way of recollection of past life
- What is the reason for the world's destruction

#### Chapter 10

- What is Divine Eye
- The way of Divine Eye
- Revilers of Noble Ones and their remedy

#### Chapter 11:

- Difference between Knowledge of the Ten Powers (Dasabala Nana) and Omniscient Knowledge (Sabbannuta Nana)

- Among Ten Powers, first to ninth Knowledges are mundane and the tenth Knowledge is supramundane

For more information, please see the relevant chapters in this work, and “The Dispeller of Delusion Part II” (Sammohavinodani) pages 141-147 and pages 171-219.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my acknowledgement to the Pali Text Society for allowing the use of their published works. I am also grateful to Lazar and May Sandar and Dr Moe Thant and Theingi Thant for their kind help with computer technology. Finally, I would like to express my special thanks to Duncan Fyfe for his willing hard work and making working together on this book an enjoyable experience.

Dr Ottara Nyana  
Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, UK  
(November, 2016)



# INTRODUCTION

## Content

The work describes the ten types of knowledge power possessed by a Buddha:

- (1) Unwholesome actions will result in unwholesome karmic consequences, and vice-versa
- (2) Timing of the appearance of karmic consequences depends on life circumstances
- (3) Practices which lead to the different planes of Hell, Animals, Ghosts, Humans, Gods and Enlightenment
- (4) The Eighteen Elements which comprise the world
- (5) The association of people with similar dispositions
- (6) Inclination, latent tendencies and characteristics of people
- (7) Meditative abilities
- (8) Previous existences
- (9) Future existences
- (10) Enlightenment

## Background

This Abridgement was not my first encounter with The Vibhanga. I had studied the entire book by a very traditional method – reading each paragraph in Pāli, then in English translation and then referring to the Commentary (in English translation) – at the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara in a class taught by Dr Ottara Nyana along with four other Abhidhamma students.

Despite all this study, the Ten Powers of the Buddha had always eluded me, and so as preparation for this work, Dr Ottara Nyana suggested that I went away and slowly and carefully reread Chapter 16 of the Vibhanga (which includes The Ten Powers). As I read and reread the text, I found the English of the Pali Text Society translations of the Vibhanga and its Commentary to be rather obscure and somewhat archaic, but nevertheless to point to a straightforward

message. In fact all the Buddha's teachings are straightforward, but they are so radical, so different from our normal ways of thinking that they can appear complex and obtuse, in part because they can be so incredibly difficult to put into practice. For example, the Buddha teaches that happiness can be found by simply stopping grasping. Ceasing to grasp at things, situations, emotions et al. Very simple to say and to understand intellectually, but very difficult to enact.

## **Origins of Abhidhamma**

The Abhidhamma, the third division of the Pāli Buddhist Canon along with the Vinaya and the Suttanta, consists of seven books, the Vibhanga being the second volume. Each book also has an associated Commentary, which contains explanations of the original text, and in some cases fleshes out in greater detail ideas presented only in outline in the Abhidhamma itself. All these works were written in the Pāli language. The author of the Abhidhamma Commentaries was Ven. Buddhaghosa, an Indian Theravada Buddhist commentator and scholar of the 5th-century CE. These are said to be based on more ancient texts written in the Sinhalese language and still in existence during Ven. Buddhaghosa's lifetime.

Modern scholarship places the authorship of the Abhidhamma itself with the Buddha's disciples in the years following his death, and sees it as a conscious effort to gather together the Buddha's teachings into a systematic map of the workings of the human mind. Alternatively, Ven. Buddhaghosa in the Atthasalini Commentary cites the Buddha himself as author, and describes the Buddha teaching Abhidhamma to the gods of the Tāvātimsa Heaven, one of the many Heavens of Buddhist cosmology. (A supernatural setting which, to me, is strangely at odds with the eminently practical content of the Abhidhamma itself.) The authorship is of course immaterial if its truth is self-evident and can be applied to our lives

## **Translators**

An enormous debt of gratitude is due to the scholars who have

translated the Abhidhamma and its Commentaries from the original Pāli into English, and to the Pali Text Society for publishing these works. In the case of the Vibhanga, the two translators we have to thank are Sayadaw U Thittila and Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli.

Sayadaw U Thittila (1896 – 1976) was born in Burma. At the age of 15 he became a novice Buddhist monk and was ordained Bhikkhu five years later, studying the Buddha’s teachings assiduously. As a result of coming first amongst all students in Burma in Pāli, Buddhist Philosophy and Literature in the 1918 Government examination for Buddhist monks, the Burmese government conferred upon him the title of ‘Pathamakyaw’ (i.e. ‘Outstanding’). He taught and lectured in monasteries for many years, first in Burma and then in Ceylon and India. In 1938 he came to England where he continued to teach and write until 1952, when he returned to Burma having been appointed lecturer in Buddhist Philosophy (Abhidhamma) at Rangoon University. In 1964 he spent another two years in England, working on the first translation of the Vibhanga from Pāli into English, and this was published by the Pali Text Society in 1969. He continued to lecture extensively throughout the world for the rest of his life.

Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (1905 – 1960) was born in England as Osbert John S Moore. He studied modern languages at Exeter College, Oxford, before joining the army at the outbreak of World War II. In 1944 he was posted to Italy serving as an intelligence officer interrogating spies and saboteurs. There he discovered Buddhism via ‘The Doctrine of Awakening’ by Julius Evola, translated by his friend Harold Edward Musson, also serving in Italy.

After the war Moore and Musson became disillusioned with their lives and left for Sri Lanka in 1949 to become Buddhist monks. Ñāṇamoli spent almost his entire eleven years as a monk at the Island Hermitage, Sri Lanka. He quickly acquired a remarkable command of the Pāli language and a wide knowledge of the canonical scriptures. He embarked on a series of translations from Pāli into English, including the Nettippakaraṇa and the Visuddhimagga

(later abridged by Dr Ottara Nyana as ‘The Essence of the Path of Purification’). His handwritten draft translations included the *Majjhima Nikāya*, later edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi and published by the Pali Text Society in 1995. Nānamoli’s manuscript translation of the Commentary to the *Vibhanga*, the *Sammohavinodani*, was discovered in 1979 ‘whilst searching through some old cupboards’ at the Island Hermitage. This was edited by L. S. Cousins, Nyanaponika Mahāthera and C. M. M. Shaw and published by the Pali Text Society in 1996 as ‘The Dispeller of Delusion’.

## **Approach**

The approach adopted in this work was to present text from the *Vibhanga*, immediately followed by the relevant portion of the Commentary. Archaic or unnatural sounding expressions were removed. The text was modified occasionally in order to clarify meaning, and abridged when doing so would not result in a loss of meaning. For example, all repetition due to the oral tradition of the original was removed. These changes hopefully gain brevity and improve understanding, but they undoubtedly lose the poetry and beauty of the original. Thus if this work whets the appetite, the reader is strongly urged towards the original full translations.

No background knowledge was assumed on the part of the reader, and all Buddhist terms are hopefully explained as they occur, making a glossary unnecessary. Pāli words from the *Vibhanga*, of which the Commentary is necessarily replete, are generally not listed in this present work in order to increase its accessibility.

The translation of the same Pāli word into English by the two original translators is unsurprisingly often different, since there is frequently no single English word that fully represents the Pāli meaning. (For instance the terms “Ten Powers” or “Ten Knowledges” are used interchangeably). Furthermore Bhikkhu Nānamoli had no knowledge of Sayadaw U Thittila’s translation of the *Vibhanga* when compiling his English Commentary. Wherever these differences in translation occurred between the *Vibhanga* and its Commentary, what I believed to be the most accurate translation

between the two was chosen, with reference to the original Pāli. I am no Pāli scholar, but my rudimentary knowledge of the language coupled with a wonderful piece of software called the Digital Pali Reader (developed by Ven. Yuttadhammo, a Canadian-born Theravada monk) just about suffices.

Finally, I would like to heartily thank Dr Ottara Nyana for giving me the opportunity to produce this work, and for his oversight, expertise, advice and humour during its production.

Duncan Fyfe, Cheshire, UK  
(November 2016)

# CHAPTER 1

## TENFOLD EXPOSITION OF KNOWLEDGE – SUMMARY

The basis of knowledge by way of tenfold division – these are the ten Buddha Powers of the Buddha, furnished with which the Buddha claims the leading position, roars the lion’s roar in the assemblies and sets rolling the supreme wheel of Teaching. What are the ten?

The Buddha comprehends, as it really is:

1. Cause as Cause and Absence of Cause as Absence of Cause
2. The Consequences of Past, Future and Present Actions
3. The Practices Leading to All Destinies
4. The World that has Many Elements and Different Elements
5. The Different Dispositions of Beings
6. The Improvement and Deterioration of the Controlling Faculties of Beings
7. The Corruption of, the Purification of, the Emergence from Jhāna, Release, Concentration and Attainment
8. The Remembrance of Previous Existences
9. The Passing Away and Rebirth of Beings
10. The Destruction of the Defilements (i.e. Enlightenment) [760]

## Tenfold Exposition of Knowledge (Summary) – Commentary

The Buddha's power is twofold: Bodily Power and Knowledge Power. Of these, the Bodily Power is to be understood to be enormous. [1998]

But firstly the Knowledge Power in the Pāli Canon is the Knowledge of the Ten Powers. The Mahāsihanāda-Sutta<sup>1</sup> refers to the Knowledge of the following types:

- the Ten Powers (as described here)
- the Knowledge of the four kinds of Confidence
  - 1) the Buddha is fully Enlightened and there is nothing more that he needs to realize.
  - 2) the Buddha is totally free of all Defilements, i.e. he has reached the pinnacle of human perfection
  - 3) the Buddha knows that certain actions and attitudes will hinder practice
  - 4) the Buddha's teaching will definitely lead those who practice it to Enlightenment.
- the Knowledge of unshakability in addressing the Eight Assemblies (of nobles, brahmins, householders, recluses, gods of the heaven of the Four Great Kings, gods of the heaven of the Thirty-three, Māra's retinue and Brahmas)
- the Knowledge of the four kinds of generation
- egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born and spontaneous generation
- the Knowledge of the five classes of destiny
- the planes of hell, animals, ghosts, humans and devas  
In the Saṃyuttaka there are 77 kinds of knowledge, and in the Paṭisambhidā Nānakathā there are 73. All these kinds of knowledge and many thousands of others appear in the Pāli Canon. They are called the Knowledge Power and provide a solid, unchanging foundation. [2001]

*"The leading position"*: the best stance, the highest stance, the bull's stance. Alternatively, the "bulls" are the former Buddhas; "their stance" is the meaning. "Stance" is a motionless stance as a result

of pressing the ground with four feet. Thus the Buddha also, being possessed of the ten Buddha Powers, stands in a motionless stance, unshakeable by any enemy or adversary in the world with its deities, by pressing with his four feet consisting of the four kinds of perfect confidence, on ground consisting of the eight assemblies. And standing thus he claims the bull's stance or "leading position", keeps to it, does not forsake it and takes it upon himself. [2002]

*"In the assemblies"*: in the eight assemblies. *"Roars the lion's roar"*: he roars the chief's roar, the roar of the fearless; or he roars a roar similar to a lion's roar. This meaning should be illustrated by the Sihanāda Sutta. Alternatively, just as the lion is so called because of conquering and because of striking down, so the Buddha is called "lion" because of conquering worldly things and because of striking down others' assertions. [2003]

Just as the lion, being possessed of the lion's powers, everywhere confident and fearless, roars his lion's roar, so also the Buddha lion, confident and fearless in the eight kinds of assembly, being possessed of the Buddha's powers, roars his lion's roar which is endowed with manifold elegance in teaching such as: "Thus is materiality" etc. [2004]

*"Sets rolling the supreme wheel"*: "supreme" is chief, highest, superlative. But this word "wheel":

As success and characteristic, part of a carriage and posture  
Gift, treasure, Law and razor wheel and so on may be seen;  
It is considered here as Wheel of Law and is to be explained in  
two ways.<sup>2</sup>

The word "wheel" is seen in the sense of success in the passage which begins: "There are, bhikkhus, these four wheels, endowed with which ..." (Anguttara Nikāya ii 32). In the passage: "On the soles of his feet wheels arise" (Digha Nikāya iii 143; Majjhima Nikāya ii 136), here it is in the sense of characteristic. In the passage: "As a wheel [follows] the foot" (Dhammapada Verse 1), here it is in the sense of part of a carriage. In the passage: "With four wheels and



nine doors” (Saṃyutta Nikāya i 74), here it is in the sense of posture. In the passage: “Eat, enjoy, be not negligent, turn the wheel” (cf. Jataka Tales iii 412), here it is in the sense of a gift. In the passage: “The divine Wheel treasure appeared” (Digha Nikāya ii 172 & iii 61), here it is in the sense of wheel treasure. In the passage: “The wheel was set in motion by me” (Sutta Nipata 557), here it is in the sense of Wheel of the Law. In the passage: “The wheel falls upon the head of the man afflicted by wants” (Jataka Tales i 414) it is in the sense of a razor wheel. In the passage: “If with a razor-edged wheel” (Digha Nikāya i 52) it is in the sense of a wheel for striking (i.e. a discus). In the passage: “A wheel of lighting” (Saṃyutta Nikāya ii 229) it is in the sense of a bolt of lightning. But this context has the sense of the Wheel of the Law. [2005]

But the Wheel of the Law is of two kinds – penetration knowledge and teaching knowledge. Penetration knowledge is produced by understanding and brings about the Enlightenment of the Buddha; teaching knowledge is produced by compassion and brings about the Enlightenment of his disciples. [2006]

Penetration knowledge is twofold: “arising” and “arisen”. For during the Buddha’s Noble Path to Enlightenment, it is arising; at the moment of Enlightenment it is arisen. Or from the Buddha’s Tusita Heaven existence up to the path of Arahatsip on the Great Wisdom Seat it is arising; at the moment of Enlightenment it is arisen. Or, starting from the Buddha’s declaration to Dipankara (i.e. one of the Buddhas of the past) up to the path of Arahatsip it is arising; at the moment of Enlightenment it is arisen. [2007]

Teaching knowledge also is of two kinds, “occurring” and “occurred”. It is occurring up to the time of Aññāsi-Konḍañña’s path of Stream Entry (NB Aññāsi-Konḍañña was one of the original five ascetics who were the Buddha’s first disciples); at the moment of fruition it is known as occurred. As regards these, penetration knowledge is supramundane (i.e. knowledge which can only be known by those who have entered the Noble Path to Enlightenment) and teaching knowledge is mundane (i.e. normally able to be known by all). But

in this case, both of these (i.e. penetration knowledge and teaching knowledge) are not shared by others; the knowledge is the Buddha's own. [2008]

*“Cause as cause”* means reason as a reason. A reason is called a cause because a consequence stands thereon, and arises and occurs through the state of dependence on it. Understanding that: ‘Any states that are causes and conditions for the arising of any states are their cause; any states that are not causes and conditions for the arising of any states are not their cause’, the Buddha understands correctly cause as cause and absence of cause as absence of cause. [2010]

The Buddha knows which practice leads to which destiny and to no destiny at all (that is, Nibbāna). He knows unerringly the nature of the kinds of practice called wholesome and unwholesome volition, so that when many men take part in killing a single living thing, one man's volition will lead to hell and another's will lead to the animal world. [2013]

The word-by-word commentary having been completed, these ten powers should now be understood to be set forth successively as follows:

- (1) In the first place the Buddha sees with the knowledge of the cause as cause and absence of cause as absence of cause, the lack of obstruction by defilement which is the possibility (cause) for the attaining, or the impossibility (absence of cause) for the non-attaining, of the destruction of the defilements by teachable beings; this is owing to seeing the possibility for mundane right view and owing to seeing the absence of possibility for assured wrong view in all beings.
- (2) Then with the knowledge of the consequences of actions he sees the absence in them of obstruction by kamma result; this is owing to seeing a rebirth-linking with three root-causes. (NB rebirth in the human realm requires a consciousness which includes the characteristics of non-greed and non-hatred – referred to as

“with two root-causes”. Sometimes non-delusion is also present, and this is known as “with three root-causes”).

- (3) With the knowledge of the practices leading to all destinies, he sees the absence of obstruction by kamma; this is owing to seeing the absence of kamma with immediate effect. (NB the five evil acts of killing ones mother, father, an Arahāt, harming the Buddha and dividing the Order of Buddhist Monks are said to be “kamma with immediate effect”).
- (4) With the knowledge of the numerous and varying elements, he sees the specific temperament of those who are thus free from obstructions for the purpose of teaching of the Law suitable to their temperament.
- (5) Then with the knowledge of different dispositions, he sees their dispositions; this is for the purpose of teaching the Law according to their disposition even if they have not accepted the means.
- (6) Then, in order to teach the Law according to the ability and capacity of those whose dispositions have been seen in this way, with the knowledge of the improvement and deterioration of the controlling faculties, he sees the state of the faculties; this is owing to seeing the keen and dull state of faith, etc.
- (7) But owing to the state of the faculties being fully understood, if they are far off then owing to mastery of the first jhāna, etc., he quickly goes to them by means of his distinction in miraculous power; and having gone, seeing:
  - (8) the state of their former existences with the knowledge of the remembrance of previous existences, and:
  - (9) the present distinction of consciousness with the knowledge of the passing away and rebirth of beings to be reached owing to the power of the Divine Eye;
  - (10) with the power of the knowledge of destruction of the

defilements, he teaches the Law for the destruction of the defilements by being rid of delusion about the way that leads to the destruction of the defilements. [2019]

## CHAPTER 2

### 1. What is the Buddha's First Knowledge – Cause as Cause and Absence of Cause as Absence of Cause?

The Buddha comprehends as follows.

It is neither possible nor reasonable that one who has entered into the Noble Path to Enlightenment with an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. with "Right View") should:

- regard any conditioned thing (i.e. something that depends on something else, that is, causes and conditions, for its existence) as permanent,
- regard any conditioned thing as pleasant
- regard any living being as having an unchanging, permanent self or soul, or any other thing or phenomena as having an unchanging, permanent essence (i.e. this would go against the Buddhist concept of 'Anatta'.)
- deprive his mother of life
- deprive his father of life
- deprive an Arahant (one who has achieved Enlightenment) of life
- cause harm to the Buddha
- divide the Order of Buddhist Monks
- proclaim a teacher other than the Buddha
- reach Enlightenment after more than seven lifetimes since first entering the Noble Path to Enlightenment.

But it is indeed possible that an ordinary person without an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. without "Right View") should carry out each of these activities".

The Buddha comprehends as follows:

- It is possible that in one world system a Buddha should arise; but not more than one at any time

- It is possible that in one world system a perfect worldwide political ruler (a “Wheel-Turning Monarch”) should arise; but not more than one at any time
- It is possible that a man should become a Buddha but it is neither possible nor reasonable that a woman should become one
- It is possible that a man should become a perfect worldwide political ruler but it is neither possible nor reasonable that a woman should become one
- It is possible that a man should become Sakka, Māra or Brahma (i.e. respectively a senior god, chief demon and chief god in Buddhist cosmology), but it is neither possible nor reasonable that a woman should become one of these.

The Buddha comprehends as follows:

- It is neither possible nor reasonable that the consequences of an unwholesome bodily, verbal or mental action should be desirable, agreeable or pleasant. Rather, these consequences should indeed not be desirable, agreeable or pleasant
- It is neither possible nor reasonable that the consequences of a wholesome bodily, verbal or mental action should not be desirable, agreeable or pleasant. Rather, these consequences should indeed be desirable, agreeable and pleasant.
- It is neither possible nor reasonable that one having unwholesome bodily, verbal or mental action should, because of that action, after death be born into a happy, heavenly world. Rather, it is indeed possible that such a one be born into a woeful, unhappy, ruinous state of hell
- It is neither possible nor reasonable that one having wholesome bodily, verbal or mental action should, because of that action, after death be born into a woeful, unhappy, ruinous state of hell. Rather, it is indeed possible that such a one be born into a happy, heavenly world.

According as the seed is sown,  
so will the fruit be harvested;  
The doer of good will harvest good,  
the doer of evil only evil.

(from Saṃyutta Nikāya i 227)

Thus some states are possible causes for the arising of other states.  
This is the “Cause as Cause”.

And some states are not possible causes for the arising of other  
states. This is “Absence of Cause as Absence of Cause”.

To understand the Buddha’s First Knowledge – The Possible as  
Possible and the Not possible as Not Possible, one must have an  
awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. “Right View”) which  
requires, amongst many attributes, wisdom, subtlety and the  
investigation of reality. [809]

## First Power Commentary

*“With Right View”*: a noble disciple who is a Stream-Enterer possessed of the Right View afforded by the Noble Path to Enlightenment. (NB the path to enlightenment in Theravada Buddhism has four stages culminating in the full enlightenment of an Arahāt, and these are progressively the Stream-Enterer, Once-Returner, Non-Returner and Arahāt. The Buddha referred to those at any one of these four stages as ‘Noble’, or as ‘Noble Disciples’. The Stream-Enterer has completely removed the first three fetters that bind a being to rebirth: belief in the concept of the self; clinging to rites and rituals; and deluded doubt). [2138]

In the section on self *“any other thing or phenomena”* is said, instead of saying *“any conditioned thing”* for the purpose of including the concepts of the kasiṇas (i.e. basic visual objects of meditation) etc. The definition should be understood by way of four planes of consciousness (i.e. sensuous plane, fine-material plane, immaterial plane and supramundane plane) for a Noble Disciple, and by way of three planes for the ordinary person (i.e. excluding the supramundane plane).

Or alternatively as regards all sections, the definition of the Noble Disciple is also correct by way of the three planes only. For whatever the ordinary person takes, the Noble Disciple takes in the reverse way. For example, whatever the ordinary person takes as *“permanent, pleasant, self”*, the Noble Disciple takes in the reverse way as *“impermanent, unpleasant, not-self”*. [2141]

As regards *“mother”* etc., the *“mother”* is just *“she who gives birth”*. [2142]

*“Arahāt”* is one in a human existence whose defilements are fully destroyed (i.e. has achieved Enlightenment). But would a Noble Disciple deprive a creature other than an Arahāt of life? That also is impossible. Even if one were to say to a Noble Disciple who had come to his next existence and was unaware of his own noble discipleship: *‘After depriving this ant of its life, you may take up the*



Wheel-Turning Monarch's rule over the whole interior of the world sphere', yet he would not deprive it of life. Alternatively, were they to tell him: 'If you do not kill this, we will cut off your head'; yet he would not kill it even were they to cut off his head. But this is said for the purpose of showing the greatly reprehensible state of the ordinary person who will commit matricide, etc. which will bring immediate karmic consequences. It also illustrates the power of the Noble Disciple who does not commit these deeds. [2143]

*"Should divide the Order"*: should cause a schism in an Order (i.e. of Buddhist Monks) which is in communion and is established within the same ordination hall. [2145]

In the list of actions given in the First Power, the five kinds of action (or "kamma" in Pāli), namely killing ones mother, killing ones father, killing an Arahāt, harming the Buddha and dividing the Order of Buddhist Monks are all said to be "kamma with immediate effect". These are actions which the ordinary person, but not the Noble Disciple, might commit. [2148]

*"Should reach Enlightenment after more than seven lifetimes since first entering the Noble Path to Enlightenment"*: it is not possible that even the Noble Disciple with the slowest understanding of all should not gain Enlightenment by the end of his seventh existence after first entering the Path. For he is called "assured of the future and destined to enlightenment". If the insight into the Noble Path is keen and courageous, the Noble Disciple attains complete enlightenment by reaching Arahātship after producing only one existence. Insight slower than that reaches Arahātship in the second, third, fourth, fifth or sixth existence. The slowest understanding of all attains complete enlightenment by reaching Arahātship after producing the seventh existence. [2161]

*"In one world system"*: in the ten-thousandfold world system. There are three fields: (1) the field of birth (2) the field of authority (3) the field of scope. [2163]

The "field of birth" is the ten-thousandfold world system, which

quaked at the time of the Buddha's entry into the mother's womb, at the time of His birth, at the time of His enlightenment, on the setting of the Wheel of the Law turning and finally at the giving up of His lifespan at the complete extinction. [2164]

The hundred-thousand-million<sup>3</sup> world spheres are the "field of authority". For it is here that the authority of the Āṭṭhānāṭṭiya (Digha Nikāya iii 194), the Mora (Jataka Tales ii 33) protection, the Dhajagga (Saṃyutta Nikāya i 218), the Ratana (Sutta Nipata ii 1) protection, etc. prevails. [2165]

The "field of scope" however has no limit. There is nothing that is not within the scope of the Buddha's Knowledge. [2166]

Regarding these three fields, there is no sutta which says: "Enlightened Ones appear in another world sphere apart from this world sphere". But there are suttas which say that they do not appear. [2167]

*"Not more than one at any time"*: they do not arise together; they arise before or after each other. When the Bodhisatta takes final rebirth-linking in his mother's womb, then the arising of another Enlightened One is precluded. Also "after" should not be understood as starting from the complete extinction, for as long as one relic as small as a mustard seed remains, the Enlightened One endures too. But when the complete extinction of the relics has occurred, the arising of another Enlightened One is not precluded. [2168]

There are three kinds of disappearance<sup>4</sup>:

- (1) disappearance of competency – the Three Pitakas
- (2) disappearance of penetration – The Truths
- (3) disappearance of practice – The Way

Penetration and practice come and go. For at one time, the bhikkhus who effect penetration are many and the bhikkhu who is still an ordinary man (i.e. not a Noble Disciple) must be pointed out. And in this island of (Sri) Lanka, on one occasion there was no bhikkhu who was still an ordinary man. Also those who fulfil the practice are

sometimes many, sometimes few. (NB Pitaka is the traditional term for any one of the three collections of Buddhist scriptures – Vinaya, Sutta and Abhidhamma – and Tipitaka is the term for the entire set of scriptures). [2169]

But the measure of the Dispensation's endurance is by competency. For a wise man, on hearing the Tipitaka, fulfils both penetration and practice. Just as our Bodhisatta, in the period during which he was working towards his own Enlightenment, after asking his first teacher Āḷāra for the preliminary work to attain the deep meditative state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception was told that his teacher did not know. Then, after going to Uddaka, his second teacher, and asking the same question, he was answered. And immediately the Buddha succeeded in the attainment. So indeed a bhikkhu, possessed of understanding, on hearing the scriptures, fulfils both penetration and practice. Therefore while competency in scripture endures, the Dispensation endures. [2170]

But when the Three Pitakas begin to disappear, then first the Abhidhamma Pitaka is lost. The Paṭṭhāna (i.e. the seventh book of the Abhidhamma) disappears first of all, and last in succession the Dhammasaṅgaha (i.e. the first book of the Abhidhamma). When that has disappeared, while the remaining two Pitakas endure, the Dispensation endures, too. While the Sutta Pitaka is disappearing, first the Anguttara Nikāya disappears. Next to that the Saṃyutta Nikāya, then the Majjhima Nikāya and then the Dīgha Nikāya disappears. A question of one or two stanzas, like the questions of Sabhiya<sup>5</sup> or the questions of Āḷāvaka<sup>6</sup> lasts a long time but cannot carry on the dispensation. These, it seems, coming from the time of the Buddha Kassapa, could not carry on the Dispensation in the interval. [2171]

But when both these two Pitakas have disappeared, while the Vinaya Pitaka endures, the Dispensation endures. When the Parivāra and the Khandhakas have disappeared, while the twofold<sup>7</sup> Sutta Vibhanga endures then the Dispensation endures. When that has disappeared, while the Mātikā endures the Dispensation endures. When the Mātikā has disappeared, while the Pātimokkha and the

Going Forth and the Admission endure, the Dispensation endures. The outward sign lasts a long time; but the lineage of white-clothed recluses, starting from the time of the Buddha Kassapa, could not carry on the Dispensation. But starting with the last to penetrate the Truths and with the breaking of his virtuous conduct by the last one, the Dispensation is termed finally withdrawn. From then on the arising of another Enlightened One is not precluded. [2172]

There are three kinds of complete extinction:

- (1) complete extinction of the defilements
- (2) complete extinction of the aggregates
- (3) complete extinction of the relics.

Complete extinction of the Buddha's defilements took place on the Wisdom Seat, the complete extinction of the Buddha's aggregates took place at Kusinārā and the complete extinction of the relics will take place in the future. [2173]

But why do they not arise simultaneously? Buddhas are extraordinary humans: 'One person, bhikkhus, arises in the world as an extraordinary person. Which one person? The Buddha, the Accomplished, Fully Enlightened One<sup>8</sup>.' But if two or four or eight or sixteen were to arise together, they would not be extraordinary. There is no outstanding gain or honour on account of two shrines in one monastery. Bhikkhus, too, are not extraordinary because they are numerous; and so it would be for the Enlightened Ones. Therefore they do not arise together. [2175]

They do not arise simultaneously also because of absence of difference in the Teaching. For the Law consisting of the divisions of the Foundations of Mindfulness and so on which one teaches would also have to be taught by another who arose. Owing to that, he would not be extraordinary. But when only one teaches the Law, the Teaching also is extraordinary. [2176]

They do not arise simultaneously also because of the absence of disputes. If many Enlightened Ones were to appear together, people would dispute like the pupils of many teachers: 'Our Enlightened

One is admirable, our Enlightened One is sweet-voiced, our Enlightened One is gifted and meritorious! Therefore they do not appear together. [2177]

This reason was also stated in detail by the Elder Nāgasena when questioned by King Milinda as follows: 'Herein, Venerable Nāgasena, this is said by the Blessed One: "It is impossible, bhikkhus, it cannot be, that in one world system there should arise simultaneously two Accomplished, Fully Enlightened Ones — that is not possible<sup>9</sup>." Venerable Nāgasena, all the Tathāgatas, when teaching, teach the 37 states that partake of enlightenment, and when preaching, preach the four Noble Truths, and when training, train in the three trainings, and when instructing, instruct in the practice of diligence. If, Venerable Nāgasena, there is for all the Tathāgatas only one teaching, one preaching, one training, one instruction, for what reason do two Tathāgatas not arise at one time? Since firstly this world is illuminated by the arising of one Buddha, if a second Buddha were to arise, it would by the radiance of the two be that much more illuminated; and two Tathāgatas giving advice would do so with ease. Show me the reason for this so that I may become free from doubt.' (NB 'Tathāgata' is an honorific title of the Buddha, and the word used by the Buddha when referring to himself). [2178]

The Elder Nāgasena replied: 'This ten-thousandfold world system, your Majesty, carries one Buddha; it carries the qualities of only one Tathāgata. If a second Buddha were to appear, this ten-thousandfold world system would not carry him; it would waver and tremble and rock and swoop and swerve and tumble and roll over and capsize and it would not come to rest. Just as with, your Majesty, a one-man boat. When one man boards it, it is evenly trimmed; but should a second man – similar in lifespan, colour, age, size, figure and limbs – board that boat, would that boat, your Majesty, bear the two?' 'No, venerable sir, it would not bear them; it would waver and tremble and rock and swoop and swerve and tumble and roll over and capsize, and it would not come to rest but would founder in the water.' 'So indeed, your Majesty, this

ten-thousandfold world system carries one Buddha; it carries the qualities of only one Tathāgata. If a second Buddha were to appear, this ten-thousandfold world system would not carry him. It would waver and tremble and rock and swoop and swerve and tumble and roll over and capsize, and it would not come to rest. [2179]

‘Or indeed, your Majesty, just as a man might eat as much food as he wished and, enjoying it and being filled up to his gullet, might be sated, appeased, filled, stuffed, dazed and stiff as a board, would he be happy if he were to eat as much again?’ ‘No, venerable sir, if he ate as much again he would die.’ ‘So indeed, your Majesty, this ten-thousandfold world system carries one Buddha.’ [2180]

‘Venerable Nāgasena, does the earth waver through an overload of the Law?’ ‘Here, your Majesty, suppose there were two carts filled to the brim with treasure, and taking the treasure from one cart, one were to load it onto the other cart. Would that cart, your Majesty, carry the treasure of the two carts?’ ‘No, venerable sir, its nave would waver, its spokes would break, its rim would shatter and its axle would break.’ ‘Why then, your Majesty, does the cart break up because of its load of too much treasure?’ ‘Yes, venerable sir.’ ‘So indeed, your Majesty, would the earth waver through an overload of the Law. Furthermore, your Majesty, this reason is given to illustrate the Buddha’s powers. [2181]

‘Herein also, hear this admirable reason why the Fully Enlightened Ones do not arise at one time. If, your Majesty, two Fully Enlightened Ones were to arise at one time, disputes would spring up between their followings thus: “Your Buddha, our Buddha!” and they would become partisan on both sides. Just as, your Majesty, disputes spring up between the followers of two powerful ministers thus: “Your minister, our minister!” and they become partisan on both sides; so indeed, your Majesty, were the Fully Enlightened Ones to arise at one time, disputes would spring up between their followers thus: “Your Buddha, our Buddha !” and they would become partisan on both sides. [2182]

'Well expounded is the question, Venerable Nāgasena, with its similes and reasons<sup>10</sup>.' [2185]

*"In one world system"*: in one world sphere. Although above ten thousand world spheres were included by this term, it is nevertheless permissible to define these with only one world sphere. For when the Buddhas arise, they do so only in this world sphere, but when the place of their arising is precluded, since they do not arise in world spheres other than this, it is precluded there too. [2186]

*"Not more than one Wheel-Turning Monarch at any time"*: here, before the manifestation of the Wheel Treasure<sup>11</sup> is "before"; after its disappearance is "after". The disappearance of the Wheel Treasure is twofold: upon the death of the monarch, or upon his going forth into homelessness. And when it disappears, it does so on the seventh day after the death or the going forth. After that the rising of a new Wheel-Turning Monarch is not precluded. But why do Wheel-Turning Monarchs not arise together in one world sphere? It is because of exclusion of disputes, because of extraordinariness and because of the might of the Wheel Treasure. For if two were to arise, disputes would arise such as: 'Our king is great, our king is great!' And by saying: 'The Wheel-Turning Monarch is in this continent, the Wheel-Turning Monarch is in that continent!' he would not be extraordinary. And that is the great might of the Wheel Treasure, namely, its ability to confer mastery over the four great continents surrounded by the two thousand islands. Thus because of the exclusion of disputes, because of extraordinariness and because of the might of the Wheel Treasure, two Wheel-Turning Monarchs do not arise simultaneously in one world sphere. [2187]

*"Neither possible nor reasonable that a woman should become (a Buddha)"*: here, let alone firstly the actual enlightened state which, by producing the qualities of omniscience is able to cross over the world, a woman cannot even begin to aspire to become a Buddha. [2188]

The human state, the right sex, too,  
the cause, the seeing of the Master,  
The going forth, right qualities,  
service and lastly zealousness —  
When these eight things are all combined  
the resolution will succeed<sup>12</sup>.

These are the reasons for the success of the aspiration. When a woman is thus incapable of accomplishing the aspiration, how could she attain the state of an Enlightened One? That is why it is “*Neither possible nor reasonable that a woman should become (a Buddha)*”. Since only he who is in all ways perfected and has a store of merit, produces the person in all ways perfected; thus it is a man that is an Accomplished, Fully Enlightened One, not a woman. [2189]

“*Neither possible nor reasonable that a woman should become (a Wheel-Turning Monarch)*”: because of not having the member enclosed in a sheath, women do not fulfil the thirty-two characteristics of a Wheel-Turning Monarch (i.e. Ven. Buddhaghosa’s reason for women to be excluded is that they are not men...). [2190]

And because the status of Sakka, Māra and Brahma are the three highest places, and because the female sex is inferior (i.e. according to Ven. Buddhaghosa in this Commentary), therefore the status of Sakka, Māra and Brahma are excluded. But since the female sex, like the male sex, does not exist in the Brahma world, is it valid to say “*it is possible that a man should become Brahma*”? Yes, because of the reappearance there of one who was a man in this world. “The status of Brahma” means the status of Great Brahma. And a woman, after developing jhāna here, when she dies, reappears as one of the retinue of Brahma, not as Great Brahma. But it should not be said that a man does not reappear there, since although there is absence of both marks of sex, still Brahmas have the male form, not the female form. [2191]

As regards “*an unwholesome bodily, verbal or mental action*”, just as bitter nimba seeds and kosātaki seeds do not produce sweet fruits



but produce only disagreeable, bitter fruits, so unwholesome bodily action and so on does not produce sweet results but only produces bitter results; and just as sugarcane and rice seeds etc. produce only sweet, pleasant-flavoured fruits and not disagreeable, bitter ones, so wholesome bodily action etc. produces only sweet results and not bitter ones. [2192]

As regards “*one having unwholesome bodily, verbal or mental action*”, “*having*” is the fivefold possession:

- (1) possession of kamma-accumulation (i.e. the moment of accumulating wholesome or unwholesome kamma)
- (2) possession of volition (as above)
- (3) possession of kamma (i.e. prior to reaching Arahatship, all beings are “possessed of kamma” with reference to previously accumulated kamma which is good for ripening)
- (4) possession of kamma-result (i.e. the actual moment of kamma-result)
- (5) possession of appearance (see next paragraph below.) [2193]

All beings (except Arahats), when about to enter into a new existence, see an image of their future realm. When about to reappear in hell for instance, an image of hell is seen – flames of fire, iron cauldrons and so on. Or when about to reappear in the human realm, an image of the mother’s womb appears; or when about to reappear in the divine world, the image is of wishing trees, palaces and so on. In this way, the ‘sign of rebirth’ appears to them. They (unlike Arahats) are not freed from this appearance of the sign of rebirth, and this is called “possession of appearance”. However, the possession of appearance is alterable, whereas the other four kinds of possession are unalterable. For although the image of one realm appears, the image of another realm may follow that first one. [2195]

There is a story about altering the “possession of appearance”. In the Paceli<sup>13</sup> Monastery at the foot of the Sona Mountain there was a preacher of the Law called the Elder Sona. His father was a hunter called Sunakhavājika<sup>14</sup> (“he who goes along with dogs”). As his father lay on his sick bed, hell appeared to this dying man. Enormous

dogs coming from the foot of the Sona Mountain surrounded him, threatening to devour him. Greatly frightened, he cried out: 'Stop them, Sona! Stop them, Sona! Did you not see?' and his father told the Elder Sona what had occurred.

The Elder Sona thought: 'How can the father of one like me be reborn in hell? I shall be his support.' He had many flowers brought by novices and made offerings by strewing them on the ground, the altar, the shrine terrace and on the Wisdom Tree terrace. He then had his father brought with his bed to the shrine terrace. Making him lie down on the bed, he said: 'This offering is for your benefit, Great Elder. This is a special offering, in distress, to the Blessed One.' Then he said: 'Pay homage to the Blessed One and set your mind at rest.' His father, seeing the offerings and doing as was suggested, set his mind at rest. Immediately the divine world appeared to him in the image of the palaces of Nandaka, Cittalatā, Missaka and Phārusaka Groves, as well as being surrounded by the image of divine dancers. 'Go, Sona, go, Sona!' 'What is it, Father?' 'These are your mothers that are coming.' The Elder Sona thought: 'Heaven has appeared to my Father.' Thus in this way, possession of appearance is alterable. [2196]

As regards these five kinds of possession, here "*having unwholesome bodily, verbal or mental action*" should be understood as stated by way of possession of accumulation, volition and kamma. [2197]

## CHAPTER 3

### 2. What is the Buddha's Second Knowledge – The Consequences of Past, Future and Present Actions (i.e. the Law of Karma)?

The Buddha comprehends as follows:

There are some unwholesome actions performed whose consequences do not mature due to one of the following:

- a fortunate rebirth (i.e. in the higher realms)
- a fortunate body (i.e. well-formed, healthy)
- a fortunate time (i.e. a fortunate period for all)
- a fortunate effort (i.e. refraining from unwholesome actions)

There are some unwholesome actions performed whose consequences do mature due to one of the following:

- an unfortunate rebirth (i.e. in the lower realms)
- an unfortunate body (i.e. ill-formed, unhealthy)
- an unfortunate time (i.e. an unfortunate period for all)
- an unfortunate effort (i.e. acting unwholesomely)

There are some wholesome actions performed whose consequences do not mature due to one of the following:

- an unfortunate rebirth
- an unfortunate body
- an unfortunate time
- an unfortunate effort

There are some wholesome actions performed whose consequences do mature due to one of the following:

- a fortunate rebirth
- a fortunate body
- a fortunate time
- a fortunate effort

To understand the Buddha's Second Knowledge, the Consequences of Past, Future and Present Actions, one must have an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. "Right View") which requires, amongst many attributes, wisdom, subtlety and the investigation of reality.  
[810]

## Second Power Commentary

In the description of the second power, *“whose consequences do not mature due to a fortunate rebirth”*: the karmic consequences do not mature, are inhibited, prevented and precluded by the fortunate rebirth. *“Fortunate rebirth”*: the rebirth or destiny that is fortunate is into the divine realm or the human realm. *“Unfortunate rebirth”*: the rebirth or destiny that is unfortunate is into the woeful realms. (NB see Chapter 4). [2198]

*“A fortunate body”*: having fortune as to the body; *“an unfortunate body”*: possessing an inferior body. [2199]

*“Fortunate time”*: a period which is generally successful for all and is called ‘the time of good kings and good people’; *“unfortunate time”*: a period which is generally unsuccessful for all and is called ‘the time of bad kings and bad people’. [2200]

*“Fortunate efforts”*: the right efforts, performing wholesome actions; *“unfortunate efforts”*: the wrong efforts, performing unwholesome actions. [2201]

For instance, (1) someone has many unwholesome actions. These would ripen (i.e. their karmic consequences would mature) while he remained in an unfortunate rebirth; but by means of a single wholesome action he is reborn in a fortunate rebirth among deities or humans. And in such a place the unprofitable gets no opportunity for result, there is only the entirely profitable. The Buddha understands that the actions of this person, while inhibited by the fortunate rebirth, do not ripen. [2202]

(2) Another has many unwholesome actions. These would ripen while he remained in an unfortunate body; but by means of a single wholesome action he is reborn in a fortunate body with well-shaped limbs, handsome, beautiful and radiant like Brahma. Even if he is born as a slave from a slave-woman’s womb, it is thought

'Such a person is not suited for dirty work.' They do not make him do rough or dirty work; but getting him to dress in fine clothes, they set him up in the position of storekeeper, etc. If it is a woman, they do not make her cook elephants' meals and so on; they give her clothes and ornaments and they make her guard the beds, or they make her a favourite. In such a person, unwholesome actions cannot bring consequences in this rebirth. The Buddha understands that those actions, while inhibited by a fortunate body in this way, do not ripen. [2203]

(3) Another has many unwholesome actions. Those would ripen for him while he remained in an unfortunate time. But by means of a single wholesome action he is reborn in a time of a good king and good people, in the period of the appearance of the people at the beginning of an aeon or of a Wheel-Turning Monarch or of a Buddha. And at such time there is no opportunity for the unprofitable which has been produced to give result; there is opportunity only for what is entirely profitable. The Buddha understands that those actions, while inhibited by a fortunate time in this way, do not ripen. [2204]

(4) Another has many unwholesome actions. These would ripen for him while he remained in a state with unfortunate efforts only. But by means of a single wholesome action he is reborn in a state with fortunate efforts only; he refrains from killing living things, etc. and he fulfils good conduct of body, speech and mind. In such a position there is no opportunity for the ripening of the unprofitable. There is opportunity only for what is entirely profitable. The Buddha understands that those actions, while inhibited by the fortunate efforts in this way, do not ripen. [2205]

(5) Another has many unwholesome actions. These would not ripen while he remained in a fortunate rebirth. But by means of a single unwholesome action, he is reborn and remains in an unfortunate rebirth. There those unwholesome actions of his bring karmic consequences and give result each in its turn. At one time they get him reborn in hell; at another time in the animal realm; at another

time in the realm of ghosts; at another time in the realm of the angry gods. For a long time they do not allow him to leave the states of woe. The Buddha understands that, having been unable to give result because of having been inhibited by a fortunate rebirth, when an unfortunate rebirth is experienced, they ripen. [2206]

(6) Another has many unwholesome actions. These would not ripen for him while he remained in a fortunate body. But by means of a single unwholesome action he is reborn in an unfortunate body; he is ugly, hideous, misshapen or unsightly like a goblin. But if he is born as a slave from a slave-woman's womb, he is made to do all the dirty work, even including removing rubbish. If it is a woman, she is also made to do all the dirty work such as cooking elephants' meals and so on. And even when born in a family home, the king's tax-collectors, getting the idea that she is a house slave, bind her and take her away like the housewife of the great landowner at Kotalavāpigāma. The Buddha understands that the unwholesome actions, having been unable to give result because of having been inhibited by a fortunate body, ripen when an unfortunate body is arrived at. [2207]

(7) Another has many unwholesome actions. These would not ripen for him while he remained in a fortunate time. But by means of a single unwholesome action, he is reborn in an unfortunate time, in the time of a bad king and bad people, bitter and ungrateful; at a time when the lifespan is ten years, when the five products of the cow (i.e. milk, curd, ghee, urine, and dung) are no more and poor grain is the best food. Although he is reborn in the human realm, he lives like wild animals or cattle. At such time there is no opportunity for the ripening of the profitable. There is only opportunity for the entirely unprofitable. The Buddha understands that the unwholesome actions, having been unable to give result because of having been inhibited by a fortunate time, ripen when an unsuccessful time is experienced. [2208]

(8) Another has many unwholesome actions. Those would not ripen

for him while he while he remained in a state with fortunate efforts only. But he is reborn in a state with unfortunate efforts only and he performs the ten kinds of unprofitable kamma beginning with the killing of living things. Then for example people catch him with stolen goods and bring him to the king, who has him tortured and executed. The Buddha understands that the unwholesome actions, having been unable to give result because of having been inhibited by fortunate effort, ripen when unfortunate effort is arrived at. [2209]

Thus unwholesome kamma, which has not given result while inhibited by the four kinds of fortune (i.e. rebirth, body, time and effort), gives result when the four kinds of misfortune are encountered. This is similar to a man who, having pleased the king by some action, is given a province to govern. Incapable of using it rightly, he breaks it like a bag of food seized by a monkey. Anything he saw that pleased him – anyone’s chariot, beast of burden, slave-girl, park or field – he might take by force. People would not be able to say anything, knowing that he was the king’s favourite. But one day he might offend another, a still greater favourite of the king. This person might go to the king and have him arrested, saying: ‘One named so and so, sire, is breaking your province.’ The king, having had him chained in the prison, might ask: ‘Who has had anything carried off by one named so and so?’ And people might come and raise a thousand shouts: ‘This property of mine was seized, that property of mine was seized !’ and the king, being furious, after torturing him in many ways in the prison, would execute him, and would say: ‘Go and throw him onto the charnel ground and bring back his skeleton.’

So does this happen. For the time when that man pleased the king with some action and got his post, is like the time when an ordinary man is reborn in heaven by some meritorious act. The people’s inability to say anything when something was taken from them is like the time when the unprofitable gets no opportunity for result when he has been reborn in heaven. Like the time when the

king's greater favourite informed the king and had him chained and imprisoned, is the time when, having fallen from heaven, he is reborn in hell. Like the time of the people's shouting: 'This property of mine was seized!' is the time of all his unprofitable actions gather together and he is reborn in hell. And his being thrown onto the charnel ground and bringing back his skeleton is like the time of his cooking for a whole aeon in hell, by the result of another action each time the karmic consequences of one action are used up. For there is not just one or two or a hundred or a thousand beings who cook in hell for one aeon by doing actions which last for the aeon; the beings who cook thus, it seems, exceed the possibility of counting. [2210]

(9) As regards *"There are some wholesome actions performed whose consequences do not mature due to an unfortunate rebirth"* and so on, the construction should be understood as follows: here someone has many good deeds. Those would ripen for him while he remained in a successful rebirth. But by means of a single unwholesome deed he is reborn and remains in an unfortunate rebirth in hell or among the angry gods. In such a place the profitable cannot give result; only the entirely unprofitable can do so. The Buddha understands that these deeds, while inhibited by an unfortunate rebirth, do not ripen. [2211]

(10) Another has many wholesome actions. Those would ripen for him while he remained in a fortunate body. But by means of a single unwholesome action he remains in an unfortunate body and is ugly like a goblin. Even if he is reborn into a royal family he does not inherit the kingdom after his father's death because it is thought: 'What will become of the kingdom of such an unlucky one?' Even when he is reborn in a general's house, he does not inherit the general's post. [2212]

The story of the Island King explains the meaning of this. The king, when his son was born, granted the queen an open favour to please her. She accepted the open favour and kept it for a later time. When the prince was seven or eight years old, he was making cocks fight



in the royal court, when one jumped up and put out his eye. When the prince was fifteen or sixteen years old, his mother the queen, thinking: 'I shall rule the kingdom,' went to the king and said: 'Sire, when the prince was born, you granted me an open favour; I accepted and kept it for a later time. Now I wish to redeem it.' 'Good, do so.' 'There is nothing, sire, that I have not already had from you. But now give the kingdom to my son.' 'Queen, your son is deficient in his limbs; the kingdom cannot be given to him.' 'If you cannot grant the favour I choose, why did you grant it to me originally?' The king was greatly distressed. 'It is impossible to give your son the rule over the whole of Sri Lanka Island; but let him set up the umbrella in the very small island of Nāgadīpa and dwell there.' He came to be known as the Small Island King. If he had not been deficient in one eye, he would have ruled over the whole of the three hundred-league Tambapanni Island (i.e. Sri Lanka) with all its prosperity. The Buddha understands that these deeds of his, while inhibited by an unfortunate body, do not ripen. [2213]

(11) Another has many fortunate actions. Those would ripen for him while he remained in a fortunate time. But by means of a single unwholesome act, he is reborn in an unfortunate time, at a time of a bad king and bad people, bitter and ungrateful, when the lifespan is short, at the extremity of the aeon. At such a time wholesome deeds cannot give result. The Buddha understands that these deeds, while inhibited by the unfortunate time, do not ripen. [2214]

(12) Another has many fortunate actions. Those would ripen for him while he remained in a state with fortunate efforts only. But being reborn in a state with unfortunate efforts only, he kills a living thing ... he fulfils all kinds of misconduct. The families that are born on an equal footing with his own do not enter into marriage contracts with him, thinking: 'This bad man is intemperate with women, intemperate with drink, intemperate with dice'; and they keep far away from him. The Buddha understands that these deeds, while inhibited by unfortunate effort, do not ripen. [2215]

In this way the wholesome actions which ripen on arrival at the four kinds of fortune do not ripen because of being inhibited by the four kinds of misfortune. [2216]

(13) Another has many wholesome actions. Those would not ripen for him while he remained in an unfortunate rebirth. But by means of a single wholesome action he is reborn in a fortunate rebirth. There, those deeds of his come to him and bring their consequences in turn. At one time they get him reborn into the human world, at another time into the divine world. The Buddha understands that, while unable to give result owing to being inhibited by unfortunate rebirth, they ripen when fortunate rebirth is encountered. [2217]

(14) Another has many wholesome actions. Those would not ripen for him while he remained in an unfortunate body. But by means of a single wholesome action he is established in a fortunate body, he is handsome ... radiant like Brahma<sup>15</sup>. Since he is established in a fortunate body, his good deeds give results. If he is reborn into a royal family, although there may be elder brothers, it is thought: 'His person is successful; when his umbrella has been raised there will be happiness in the world,' and it is he that they anoint. And if he is reborn into a viceroy's house and so on, when his father dies he inherits the vicerealty, the general's post, the storekeeper's post etc. The Buddha understands that while unable to give result owing to being inhibited by an unfortunate body, they ripen when a fortunate body is arrived at. [2218]

(15) Another has many wholesome actions. Those would not ripen for him while he remained in an unfortunate time. But by means of a single wholesome action he is reborn in a fortunate time, in a time of a good king and good people. The good deeds of one who is reborn in such a fortunate time give result. [2219]

(16) Another has many wholesome actions. Those would not ripen for him while he remained in a state of unfortunate effort. But by means of a single wholesome action he is reborn in a state of fortunate effort,

he fulfils the three kinds of good conduct; he keeps the five precepts, the ten precepts. For one reborn in a successful time, kings send their daughters to him, adorned with every kind of ornament, thinking: 'They are fit for him'. They also send him various special gifts such as chariots, beasts of burden, gems, gold, silver and so on. And when he goes forth, he becomes greatly famous and mighty. [2244]

Here is a story. It seems that King Kūṭakaṇṇa had a great admiration for the elder Cūlasudhamma who dwelt at Girigāmaṇṇa. The king asked the elder's mother: 'What does the elder like?' 'Radish, your Majesty.' The king went to the elder's monastery with radishes, but when he gave them to the elder he was unable to observe his face. When he had come out, he asked the queen outside in the cell: 'What is the elder like?' 'You, being a man, are unable to observe; how shall I be able? I do not know what he is like.' The king said: 'In my kingdom I am not able to observe the son of a tax-gatherer who is a monk; great indeed is the Buddha's dispensation,' and he clapped his hands with joy. [2245]

And he greatly admired the Elder Tipiṭaka Cūlanāga. A boil appeared on the elder's finger. The king went to the monastery to see the elder. With great affection he took the finger in his mouth. The boil burst, and he did not spit out the pus and blood but out of love for the elder he swallowed it as though it were ambrosia. [2246]

Here is a simile which brings out the true meaning. It seems that a king became somewhat angered with a minister and had him chained in prison. His relatives knew the king was angry and said nothing. When the sharpness of his anger was abated, they told the king of the innocence of the minister. The king freed him and restored him to his original post. Then there was no end to the gifts which came to him from various quarters. People could not cope with them. [2249]

The time of his being chained in prison when the king was somewhat angered, is the time of the ordinary man being reborn in hell. Being

restored to his original post is the time when he is reborn in heaven. Like the being unable to cope with all the gifts, are the good deeds bringing him to nibbāna on arrival at the four kinds of fortune (i.e. a fortunate rebirth, body, time and effort) by leading him from happy station to happy station, that is from the divine world to the human world and from the human world to the divine world by giving profitable consequences for even a hundred thousand aeons. [2250]

## Paṭisambhidā Method

Having firstly illustrated the Second Power in accordance with the Vibhanga, it should be further illustrated in accordance with the Paṭisambhidā method, given in Paṭisambhidā ii 78. (NB “Paṭisambhidā” is the twelfth book of the Khuddaka Nikāya, and has been translated as “The Path of Discrimination” by Ven. Ñāṇamoli). [2251]

The extract is given below:

- (1) *There has been kamma, there has been kamma-result:*
- (2) *there has been kamma, there has been no kamma-result.*
- (3) *There has been kamma, there is kamma-result:*
- (4) *there has been kamma, there is no kamma-result.*
- (5) *There has been kamma, there will be kamma-result:*
- (6) *there has been kamma, there will be no kamma-result.*
- (7) *There is kamma, there is kamma-result:*
- (8) *there is kamma, there is no kamma-result.*
- (9) *There is kamma, there will be kamma-result:*
- (10) *there is kamma, there will be no kamma-result.*
- (11) *There will be kamma, there will be kamma-result:*
- (12) *there will be kamma, there will be no kamma-result.*

Regarding this extract from the Paṭisambhidā:

- (1) “*There has been kamma*” means “there has been, only in the past, kamma which was accumulated in the past”; but “*there has been kamma-result*” is said regarding that by means of which result was given in the past.

- (2) But when many kammās to be experienced here and now and so on have been accumulated, one kamma to be experienced here and now gives result; the rest are without result. One kamma to be experienced on rebirth accomplishes the rebirth-linking; the rest are without result. One is reborn in hell through one kamma of immediate effect; the rest are without result. Among the eight attainments, one causes rebirth in the Brahma world; the rest are without result. It is with reference to this that “*there has been no kamma-result*” is said. But also when one, after performing much profitable and unprofitable kamma, attains Arahātship thanks to a good friend, of that kamma it is said: “*There has been no kamma-result*”. [2252]
- (3) Of that which was accumulated in the past and gives result now, it is said: “*There has been kamma, there is kamma-result*”.
- (4) Of that which was accumulated in the past and gives no result now, it is said: “*There has been kamma, there is no kamma-result*”.
- (5) Of that which was accumulated in the past and will give result in the future, it is said: “*There has been kamma, there will be kamma-result*”.
- (6) Of that which was accumulated in the past and will give no result in the future, it is said: “*There has been kamma, there will be no kamma-result*”. [2253]
- (7) Of that which is accumulated now and gives result now too, it is said: “*There is kamma, there is kamma-result*”.
- (8) Of that which is accumulated now and gives no result now, it is said: “*There is kamma, there is no kamma-result*”.
- (9) Of that which is accumulated now and will give result in the future, it is said: “*There is kamma, there will be kamma-result*”.
- (10) Of that which is accumulated now and will give no result in the future, it is said: “*There is kamma, there will be no kamma-result*”.
- (11) Of that which will be in the future and will become future result, it is said: “*There will be kamma, there will be kamma-result*”.

(12) Of that which will be in the future and will become without result, it is said: "*There will be kamma, there will be no kamma-result*". [2254]

The Buddha's knowledge consisting of knowing in all these ways the kamma interval and the kamma-result interval should be understood as the second power in the sense of utter stability<sup>16</sup>. [2255]

## CHAPTER 4

### 3. What is the Buddha's Third Knowledge – The Practices Leading to All Destinies?

The Buddha comprehends as follows:

- this is the path, this is the practice leading to the hell plane
- this is the path, this is the practice leading to the animal plane
- this is the path, this is the practice leading to the ghost plane
- this is the path, this is the practice leading to the human plane
- this is the path, this is the practice leading to the deva plane
- this is the path; this is the practice leading to Enlightenment

To understand the Buddha's Third Knowledge – The Practice Leading to All Destinies, one must have an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. "Right View") which requires, amongst many attributes, wisdom, subtlety and the investigation of reality. [811]

## Third Power Commentary

In the description of the third power, either “*path*” or “*practice*” is a name for kamma itself. [2256]

As regards “*leading to the hell plane*” and so on, hell is in the sense of being without satisfaction and in the sense of being without delight. [2257]

“*Animals*” are those which proceed horizontally instead of going upright. Animals themselves are the animal kind of generation. [2258]

“*Ghosts*” themselves are the ghost realm, without a specific realm of their own. [2259]

“*Humans*” are because of prominence of the mind<sup>17</sup>. Humans themselves are the human world. [2260]

“*Deva*” or deities sport with the five cords of sense desire or they shine through great success of place. Deities themselves are the world of deities. [2261]

And all of this way the Buddha knows. How? When the inhabitants of a whole village together kill a single pig or deer, the volition of every person has another’s life faculty as its only object. Yet that kamma is diverse even at the moment of their accumulating it. For amongst the villagers, one acts purposefully with care; another acts because he is prompted to do so by others thus: ‘Come, you do it too’; another goes about without preventing it as though of the same desire. Amongst these, one is reborn in hell by that same kamma, another in the animal kind of generation, another in the ghost realm. At the very moment of kamma-accumulation, the Buddha understands that: ‘Because of being accumulated in this manner, this one will be reborn in hell, this one in the animal kind of generation, this one in the ghost realm.’ And for one being reborn in hell, he understands that: ‘This one will be reborn in the eight great hells; this one will be reborn in the sixteen prominent hells.’



And for one being reborn in the animal kind of generation, he understands that: 'This one will become a footless one, this one a biped, this one a quadruped, this one a many footed one.' And as for one being reborn in the ghost realm, he understands that: 'This one will become one consumed with craving, this one full of hunger and thirst, this one dependent on others' gifts.' [2264]

And amongst these kinds of kamma, he understands that: 'This kamma will not be able to bring about rebirth-linking; being weak, it will ripen in the body when rebirth-linking has been furnished by another kamma.' [2265]

Likewise, when the inhabitants of a whole village give alms food together, the volition of every person has only alms food as object. Yet that kamma is diverse, as before, at the moment of their accumulating it. Some among them will be reborn into the divine world, some into the human world. At the very moment of accumulation, the Buddha understands that: 'Because of being accumulated in this manner, this one will be reborn in the human world, this one in the divine world.' And for one being reborn into the divine world, he understands into which of the divine realms the being will be reborn: Paranimmitavasavatti, Nimmānarati, Tusita, Yāma, Tāvātimsa, Cātumahārājika and finally among the Earth deities. But this one will be reborn as a supreme divine king; this one will be reborn as his retainer occupying second or third place.' And for those being reborn among humans, he understands: 'This one will be reborn in a Khattiya family (i.e. of the ruling class), this one in a Brahman family (i.e. of the academic class), this one in a Vessa family (i.e. of the mercantile class), this one in a Sudda (i.e. of the artisan class) family. (NB these are the categories of the Indian caste system at the time of the Buddha). But this one will be reborn a king among men; this one will be reborn as his retainer occupying second or third place<sup>18</sup>.' [2266]

And amongst these kinds of kamma, he understands that: 'This kamma will not be able to bring about rebirth-linking; being weak, it will ripen in the person when rebirth-linking has been furnished.' [2267]

Likewise, amongst those who established insight too, he understands that: 'According to the manner in which insight meditation is undertaken, this one will attain Arahathship, this one will be unable to attain Arahathship, this one will become only a Non-Returner, this one only a Once Returner, this one only a Stream Enterer; this one will not be able to realize path nor fruition, he will be established only in the insight which has the three characteristics of existence as object (i.e. impermanence, suffering and non-self); this one only in the understanding of the concept of conditionality and dependently originated states; this one only in the understanding of the five different aggregates of materiality, feeling, perception, formations, consciousness; this one only in the understanding of the immaterial sphere of consciousness which is experienced in very deep meditative states; this one only in the understanding of the fine-material sphere of consciousness which is experienced in deep meditative states; this one will only define the mere material great essentials of extension, temperature, movement or cohesion; this one will not be able to discern anything.' [2268]

And amongst those doing preliminary work on kasiṇas, he understands that: 'For that one it will be only preliminary work, he will not be able to arouse the sign (i.e. a visual image characteristic of entering deep meditative states). But this one will be able to arouse the sign, but he will not be able to reach absorption (i.e. when the meditator becomes fully absorbed in the object and no hindrances can disturb him); this one, by reaching absorption, making the jhāna the basis for insight (i.e. insight into the true nature of reality, namely the three characteristics of existence: impermanence, suffering and non-self) and establishing insight, will attain Arahathship. [2269]

## CHAPTER 5

### 4. What is the Buddha's Fourth Knowledge – The World that has Many Elements and Different Elements?

The Buddha comprehends:

- the 5 different Aggregates
  - materiality aggregate
  - feeling aggregate
  - perception aggregate
  - formations aggregate
  - consciousness aggregate
- the 12 different Bases
  - eye base, visual object base
  - ear base, sound base
  - nose base, smell base
  - tongue base, taste base
  - body base, tactile object base
  - mind base, mental object base
- the 18 different Elements
  - eye element, visual object element, eye consciousness element
  - ear element, sound element, ear consciousness element
  - nose element, smell element, nose consciousness element
  - tongue element, taste element, tongue consciousness element
  - body element, tactile object element, body consciousness element
  - mind element, mental object element, mind consciousness element
- the world of many elements and different elements

To understand the Buddha's Fourth Knowledge – The World that has Many Elements and Different Elements, one must have an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. "Right View") which requires, amongst many attributes, wisdom, subtlety and the investigation of reality. [812]

## Fourth Power Commentary

In the description of the fourth power, “*different aggregates*” means that he understands the different aspects of the five thus: ‘This is called the materiality aggregate ... this is called the consciousness aggregate.’ And as regards these, he understands the difference of each aggregate thus: ‘The materiality aggregate in one way ... the materiality aggregate in eleven ways, (i.e. Great Essentials, Sensitive Phenomena, Objective Phenomena, Sexual Phenomena, Material Support for the Mind, Life Faculty, Nutriment, Space, Communicating Phenomena, Mutable Phenomena and Characteristics of Matter). The feeling aggregate in one way ... the feeling aggregate in many ways. The perception aggregate in one way ... the formations aggregate in one way ... the consciousness aggregate in one way ... the consciousness aggregate in many ways<sup>19</sup>. [2270]

“*Different bases*”: he understands the difference of the bases thus: ‘This is called eye base ... this is called the mind base. Of these, ten bases belong to the sense sphere; two are of the four planes (i.e. only ‘*Mental Object Base*’ and ‘*Mind Base*’ exist in each of the four consciousness planes of sense-sphere consciousness, fine-material sphere consciousness, immaterial sphere consciousness and supramundane consciousness). [2271]

“*Different elements*”: he understands the difference of the elements thus: this is called the eye element ... this is called the mind-consciousness element. Of these, sixteen elements belong to the sense sphere; two are of the four planes, namely ‘*Mental Object Element*’ and ‘*Mind Consciousness Element*’. [2272]

“*The world of many elements and different elements*”: this is included in order to show that the Buddha understands not only the difference of the material world that is grasped at by kamma but also that he understands the difference of the material world that is not grasped at. For the Paccekabuddhas (i.e. those who have attained supreme and perfect insight, but do not proclaim the truth to the

world) and the chief disciples know only in part the difference of the material world that is grasped at, and not comprehensively; but they do not know the difference of the material world that is not grasped at. But an Omniscient Buddha understands the difference of the material world that is not grasped at thus: 'When a particular 'materiality-great-essential-element' (i.e. extension, temperature, movement or cohesion) is prominent, then this tree's trunk is white, this one is black, this one is smooth, this one has thick bark, this one has thin bark; when another materiality-great-essential-element is prominent, this tree's leaf is such and such as to colour, shape, etc. But owing to the prominence of another materiality-great-essential-element, this tree's flower is blue, yellow, red, white, scented, or bad-smelling. When one materiality-great-essential-element is prominent, its fruit is small, large, long, round, well-shaped, ill-shaped, smooth, rough, scented, bad-smelling, sweet, bitter, sour, sharp or acid. When another materiality-great-essential-element is prominent, this tree's thorn is sharp, blunt, straight, crooked, coppery, black or white.' For this is a Power only of the Omniscient Buddhas, not of others. [2273]

## CHAPTER 6

### 5. What is the Buddha's Fifth Knowledge – The Different Dispositions of Beings?

The Buddha comprehends as follows.

There are beings of inferior disposition and there are beings of superior disposition (with regard to resolve, inclination and conduct).

In the past, present and future, beings of inferior disposition depend on, approach and associate with beings of inferior disposition.

In the past, present and future, beings of superior disposition depend on, approach and associate with beings of superior disposition.

To understand the Buddha's Fifth Knowledge – The Different Dispositions of Beings, one must have an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. "Right View") which requires, amongst many attributes, wisdom, subtlety and the investigation of reality. [813]

## Fifth Power Commentary

In the description of the fifth power, “*of inferior disposition*” means of inferior inclinations; “*of superior disposition*” means of good inclinations. “*Depend on*”: supported by, stick to. “*Approach*”: frequent. “*Associate with*”: keep company with: approach again and again. For if a teacher and head teacher are not virtuous in conduct and their student monks are virtuous in conduct, the latter do not approach their own teacher and head teacher; they approach only bhikkhus who are like themselves. If the teachers and head teacher are suitable bhikkhus and the others unsuitable, they also do not approach the teacher and head teacher; they approach only those of inferior resolution like themselves. But in order to show that such approaching is not only in the present but also in the past and future, it is said “*in the past, present and future*”. [2274]

But what is it that assures this cultivation of the unvirtuous by the unvirtuous, and of the virtuous by the virtuous, this cultivation of the stupid by the stupid and the wise by the wise? It is inclination that assures it. [2275]

Many bhikkhus, it seems, were wandering in a village on alms-round in groups. People brought cooked rice and filled their bowls, saying: ‘Use it according to how you have grouped yourselves by similarity;’ they gave it and took their leave. The bhikkhus said amongst themselves: ‘Friends, people have engaged in work according to the Dhātu Saṃyutta’. [2276]

Also the Elder Tipiṭaka-Cūla-Abhaya was going with five hundred bhikkhus to pay homage at the shrine in Nāgadīpa when he was invited by people in a certain village. Along with the elder was an uncongenial bhikkhu. In the local monastery there was another uncongenial bhikkhu. While the two Orders of Bhikkhus were visiting the village, both those persons, although never having met before, began talking together in one corner and laughed and laughed. When the elder saw them he said: ‘The Dhātu Saṃyutta was expounded by the Fully Enlightened One who knew.’ [2277]



Having said that it is inclination that makes this happen, the meaning can be illustrated by the Dhātu Saṃyutta from the Saṃyutta Nikāya. The Buddha was lying on a sickbed on the Vulture-Peak Hill, having around him for protection Sāriputta, Moggallāna and his other senior disciples, each one walking up and down with his own following of monks. Observing this, the Buddha addressed the bhikkhus: 'Do you see, bhikkhus, Sāriputta walking up and down with many bhikkhus?' 'Yes, venerable sir.' 'All those bhikkhus are of great understanding', thus all should be elaborated. (NB Sāriputta was renowned for his own high degree of understanding). [2278]

## CHAPTER 7

### 6. What is the Buddha's Sixth Knowledge – The Improvement and Deterioration of the Controlling Faculties of Beings?

The Buddha comprehends of beings:

- inclination of thought
- latent tendency
- characteristic action
- disposition
- with little or much dust in their eyes,
- with keen or dull controlling faculties
- with good or bad qualities
- easy or hard to instruct
- fit or not fit. [814]

What is the “inclination of thought” of beings?

- the world is eternal or not eternal
- the world is finite or infinite
- vital principle and the body are the same or different
- a Buddha exists after death or does not exist after death or neither exists nor does not exist after death.

Thus there are beings depending on ‘Eternity’ views or ‘Annihilation’ views. By not adhering to either of these extremes, (i.e. both wrong views), ability in conformity (i.e. insight knowledge) and knowledge as it really is (i.e. path knowledge) of specific conditionality and dependently originated states is gained. [815]

What is the “latent tendency” of beings? The seven latent tendencies (or proclivities) are:

1. latent tendency to sensuous lust,
2. latent tendency to aversion
3. latent tendency to conceit
4. latent tendency to wrong view
5. latent tendency to doubt

6. latent tendency to lust for existence
7. latent tendency to ignorance.

The tendency of beings to lust after things in the world which are lovely or pleasant lies latent; the tendency of beings to feel aversion towards things in the world which are unlovely or unpleasant lies latent. In these two states, ignorance always occurs, along with – at times – conceit, wrong view and doubt. [816]

What is the “characteristic action” of beings? Action producing wholesome karmic consequences, action producing unwholesome karmic consequences and action producing imperturbable karmic consequences; having a low or high level. [817]

What is the “disposition” of beings? There are beings of inferior disposition and there are beings of superior disposition (with regard to resolve, inclination and conduct). In the past, present and future, beings of inferior disposition depend on, approach, and associate with beings of inferior disposition. In the past, present and future, beings of superior disposition depend on, approach and associate with beings of superior disposition. (NB see also the Buddha’s Fifth Knowledge). [818]

Who are those beings “with much dust in their eyes”? The ten bases of the corruptions are: greed, hatred, dullness, conceit, wrong view, doubt, sloth, distraction, absence of self-respect, and disregard for the consequences of unwholesome actions. Those beings in which these ten bases of corruption are pursued, developed, repeated and enlarged are those beings with much dust in their eyes. [819]

Who are those beings “with little dust in their eyes”? Those beings in whom these ten bases of corruption are not pursued, not developed, not repeated and not enlarged. [820]

Who are those beings “with dull controlling faculties”? The five controlling faculties are: The controlling faculties of confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Those beings in whom these five controlling faculties are not pursued, not

developed, not repeated and not enlarged are those beings with weak controlling faculties. [821]

Who are those beings “with keen controlling faculties”? Those beings in whom these five controlling faculties are pursued developed, repeated, and enlarged. [822]

Who are those beings with “bad qualities”? Those beings that have: wrong inclinations, wrong latent tendencies, unwholesome characteristic actions, inferior dispositions, much dust in their eyes and weak controlling faculties. [823]

Who are those beings with “good qualities”? Those beings that have: right inclinations, wholesome characteristic actions, superior dispositions, little dust in their eyes and sharp controlling faculties. [824]

Who are those beings “hard and easy to instruct”? Those beings with bad qualities are hard to instruct. Those beings with good qualities are easy to instruct. [825]

Who are those beings who are “not fit”? Those beings that are obstructed by unwholesome action, corruption or unwholesome karmic consequences; have no confidence, have no wish to do good, have no wisdom accompanying rebirth consciousness and are not fit to enter into the Noble Path to Enlightenment. [826]

Who are those beings who are “fit”? Those beings that are not obstructed by unwholesome action, corruption or unwholesome karmic consequences; have confidence, wish to do good, have wisdom accompanying rebirth consciousness and are fit to enter into the Noble Path to Enlightenment.

To understand the Buddha’s Sixth Knowledge – The Improvement and Deterioration of the Controlling Faculties of Beings, one must have an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. “Right View”) which requires, amongst many attributes, wisdom, subtlety and the investigation of reality. [827]

## Sixth Power Commentary

In the description of the sixth power, *"inclination of thought"*: the inclination where beings dwell; that dwelling place of theirs is either wrong view or correct knowledge. *"Latent tendency"*: a defilement which is inherent because unabandoned, *"characteristic action"*: the profitable and unprofitable actions formed by the body and so on, *"disposition"*: inclination towards others. As regards *"with little dust in their eyes"*: they have little of the dust of greed, hate and delusion in the eye of understanding; and *"with much dust"* gives the opposite meaning. [2279]

By both of these he shows beings with slight defilement and with much defilement. Those whose faculties of confidence, etc. are sharp are *"with keen controlling faculties"*; and those in whom they are weak are *"with dull controlling faculties"*. Those whose general qualities consisting of *"inclination of thought"*, *"latent tendency"* and so on are good, have *"good qualities"*; the opposite kind have *"bad qualities"*. Those who discern a reason when it is explained and can easily be made to understand, are said to be *"easy to instruct"*; the opposite kind are *"hard to instruct"*. Those who are suitable for the penetration of the Noble Path and have the potential for it are *"fit"*; the opposite kinds are *"not fit"*. [2280]

After listing the schedule of the sixth power, the question is asked: *"what is the inclination of thought of beings?"* and so on, classifying it in order of succession. The meaning of *"the world is eternal"* and so on has been stated above in the commentary to the Description Section. Owing to the fact that all wrong views can be included in the eternity and annihilation views together, all beings who hold wrong views are dependent on those two kinds of wrong view. This is the *'inclination of thought'* of ordinary people (but not Noble Disciples) who are dependent on the wheel of life. [2281]

The inclination of thought of ordinary people about to achieve fruition but who are still based on the mundane world, is described as: *"not adhering to either of these extremes"*. *"Either of these extremes"*: the

two extremes called eternity and annihilation. “By not adhering to”: without having recourse to”; “*specific conditionality and dependently originated states*”: ignorance which is the cause of mental formations etc., and mental formation etc. which are the result of ignorance etc. “*Ability in conformity*” is ‘mundane’ insight knowledge and “*knowledge as it really is*” is ‘supramundane’ path knowledge. [2282]

This is what is said: “The insight into dependent origination and into dependently originated states which is arrived at without having recourse to either of the extremes of eternity or annihilation, and the path knowledge which is superior to that — this is the inclination of thought of beings; and this is the inclination of thought, this is the dwelling place of all beings, both those based on the wheel of life and those about to achieve fruition”. This is the agreed commentary of the teachers. [2283]

In the description of the latent tendencies: “*The tendency of beings to lust after things*” is the inherent tendency of greed for sense desire; and so on with the remaining terms. “*Things in the world which are lovely or pleasant*”: what is classed as dear and agreeable in this world. This signifies a desirable object as the direct cause of enjoyment. “*Lies latent*”: regarding that desirable object, beings’ inherent tendency to greed in the sense of its being unabandoned remains latent. Just as there is water below, above and on all sides of one immersed in water, so indeed for a desirable object, the arising of greed is completely habitual for beings, as is the arising of aversion for an undesirable object. “*In these two states*”: thus in these states which are possessed respectively of greed for a desirable object and aversion for an undesirable object. “*Ignorance always occurs*”: being connected with greed or aversion, ignorance always lurks along with these two factors. “*Along with*”: through being along with that ignorance; “*conceit, wrong view and doubt*”: the nine kinds of conceit, the 62 kinds of wrong view (NB these are listed in the Brahmajala Sutta in the Long Discourses of the Buddha) and the eight-based doubt. It should be understood that the inherent tendency of greed for existence is included in the inherent tendency of greed for sense desire. [2286]

In the description of “*characteristic action*”, the thirteen volitions are “*Action producing wholesome consequences*” (i.e. the eight wholesome volitions of sense sphere consciousness and the five volitions of fine-material sphere consciousness – a deep level of meditative absorption); the twelve are “*action producing unwholesome consequences*” (i.e. the twelve unwholesome volitions of sense sphere consciousness); and the four are “*action producing imperturbable consequences*” (i.e. the four volitions of immaterial-sphere state consciousness – a very deep level of meditative absorption). Those of the sense sphere are “*low level*”; the others are “*high level*”. An alternative meaning is that any with little result have a “*low level*”; and any with much result have a “*high level*”. [2287]

The description of “*disposition*” has been made clear previously in paragraph 2274. But why is “*disposition*” included again? It was included previously as showing a power separately. Here it is for the purpose of showing the keenness and dullness of beings’ faculties. [2288]

In the description “*with much dust in their eyes*”; “*developed*” means to become abundant. The description here is in reverse order to that given at the beginning of the Sixth Power, i.e. “*with much dust*” is followed by “*with little dust*” according to the order of abandoning. [2289]

“*Not developed*”: not become abundant. [2290]

In the description of “*keen controlling faculties*” and “*dull controlling faculties*” it is the faculties as decisive support for the Noble Path that are expounded. These are given here in the description in reverse order as before. Likewise in the description of “*have bad qualities*” and so on. “*Have wrong inclinations*”: have unprofitable inclinations of thought; “*unwholesome characteristic actions*”: fulfillers of the formation of demerit; “*inferior dispositions*”: delighters in personality and with inclinations towards the process of existence. [2291]

In the description “*with good qualities*”, because there is no latent tendency called “*good*”, therefore “*good latent tendency*” is not

said. The rest should be understood in the opposite way to that already stated. [2292]

In the description of “*fit*” and “*not fit*”, “*obstructed by unwholesome action*” means the five kinds of kamma with immediate effect. “(Obstructed by) *corruption*”: with assured wrong view. “(Obstructed by) *unwholesome consequences*”): with root-causeless rebirth-linking. But because entry to the Noble Path is not possible for those with only a two-rooted rebirth-linking, those beings should also be understood as “*obstructed by unwholesome consequences*”. (NB see paragraph 2019, item 2 above). [2293]

“*Have no confidence*”: devoid of confidence in the Buddha and so on. “*Have no wish to do good*”: devoid of profitable zeal or desire-to-act. “*Have no wisdom accompanying rebirth consciousness*”: devoid of life continuum understanding i.e. having only a two-rooted rebirth-linking consciousness. But even when life-continuum understanding is complete, if that life continuum of a person is not the basis for the supramundane, such a person too is said to “have no wisdom”. “*Are not fit to enter into the Noble Path to Enlightenment*”: are unable to enter upon the path called the certainty of rightness in profitable things. [2294]

“*Not obstructed by unwholesome action*” and so on should be understood in the opposite sense. [2295]

This is the classification of two kinds of knowledge, namely knowledge of the configuration of faculties and knowledge of inclination of thought and latent tendency. But here the knowledge of the configuration of faculties is classified by means of the knowledge of inclination of thought and latent tendency. So the two kinds of knowledge together become one kind of power knowledge. [2296]



## CHAPTER 8

### 7. What is the Buddha's Seventh Knowledge – The Corruption of, the Purification of, the Emergence from Jhāna, Release, Concentration and Attainment?

There are four types of Jhāna practitioners. There is a certain Jhānic practitioner who:

- having really attained Jhāna, concludes "There is failure"
- having really failed to attain Jhāna, concludes "There is attainment"
- having really attained Jhāna, concludes "There is attainment"
- having really failed to attain Jhāna, concludes "There is failure".

There are another four types of Jhāna practitioners. There is a certain Jhānic practitioner who:

- attains slowly, emerges quickly
- attains quickly, emerges slowly
- attains slowly, emerges slowly
- attains quickly, emerges quickly.

There are another four types of Jhānic practitioners. There is a certain Jhānic practitioner who, in concentration, is:

- skilful at concentrating, but not skilful at maintaining
- skilful at maintaining, but not skilful at concentrating
- skilful at concentrating and skilful at maintaining
- neither skilful at concentrating nor skilful at maintaining.

Jhāna means the four jhānas, i.e. deep levels of meditative absorption: first jhāna, second jhāna, third jhāna, fourth jhāna.

Release has eight types

- First Release: One having material qualities sees visible objects.
- Second release: Not perceiving his own internal material qualities, he sees external visible objects.
- Third Release: He is intent upon the beautiful object only (i.e., the Jhānic object).

- Fourth Release: Having wholly passed the perceptions of form by terminating sense perceptions, by not attending to the diversity of perceptions, and concentrating on “Infinite is space”, he attains and dwells in the state of infinity of space.
- Fifth Release: Having wholly passed the state of infinity of space, and concentrating on “Infinite is consciousness”, he attains and dwells in the state of infinity of consciousness.
- Sixth Release: Having wholly passed the state of infinity of consciousness, and concentrating on “There is nothing whatever”, he attains and dwells in the state of nothingness.
- Seventh Release: Having wholly passed the state of nothingness, he attains and dwells in the state that is “Neither perception nor non-perception”.
- Eighth Release: Having wholly passed the state that is neither perception nor non-perception, he attains and dwells in the state of “Cessation of perception and feeling”.

Concentration is of three different types:

- concentration accompanied by the mental factors of initial application and sustained application (i.e. first jhāna)
- concentration without initial application and with sustained application only (i.e. second jhāna)
- concentration with neither initial application nor sustained application (i.e. higher jhānas)

Attainment means dwelling in the nine successive attainments:

- attainment of the first jhāna
- attainment of the second jhāna
- attainment of the third jhāna
- attainment of the fourth jhāna
- attainment of the state of infinity of space
- attainment of the state of infinity of consciousness
- attainment of the state of nothingness
- attainment of the state that is neither perception nor non-perception
- attainment of cessation of perception and feeling.

“Corruption” means a state relapsing into sense desire etc., after emerging from an unfamiliar first jhāna;

“Purification” means a state reaching for a higher jhāna;

“Emergence” means emergence from this or that level of concentration; purification is also emergence.

To understand the Buddha’s Seventh Knowledge – The Corruption of, the Purification of, the Emergence from Jhāna, Release, Concentration and Attainment – one must have an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. “Right View”) which requires, amongst many attributes, wisdom, subtlety and the investigation of reality.  
[828]

## Seventh Power Commentary

In the description of the seventh power, “*four types of Jhāna practitioners*”: are four kinds of people who are called practitioners of jhāna. In the first group of four statements, the first statement describes an obtainer of attainment who believes he is not an obtainer, since although he achieves the meditation object, he does not believe it to actually be the meditation object. This should be understood as one who is an ‘obtainer of an unfamiliar jhāna’. The second is a non-obtainer of the attainment who believes he is an obtainer, since although he does not achieve the meditation object, he believes that he has done so. This is called ‘a practitioner of sleep as jhāna’: having gone to sleep, he imagines he has obtained the attainment when he wakes up. The third is an obtainer of the attainment who perceives that he is an obtainer of the attainment; he achieves the meditation object and perceives it to be the meditation object. This should be understood as ‘an obtainer of familiar jhāna’. The fourth is a non-obtainer who perceives that he is a non-obtainer, he does not achieve the meditation object, and perceives he has not done so. Here, two kinds of people who are not practitioners of jhāna have in fact been included among the “*four types of jhāna practitioners*”. [2297]

In the second group of four statements, one who manages to suppress states obstructive to concentration with prompting and with effort is called one who “*attains slowly*”. One who, having remained in jhāna for only one or two turns of consciousness, then emerges, is called one who “*emerges quickly*”. But one who easily purifies states obstructive to concentration is called one who “*attains quickly*”. One who emerges when the time has gone by instead of emerging at the time decided upon is called one who “*emerges slowly*”. The other two should be understood in this same way. These four types of people are obtainers of attainment only. [2298]

In the third group of four statements, one who is clever at defining and analysing thus: ‘This jhāna is five-factored, this is four-factored’ is called “*skilful at concentrating*”<sup>20</sup>. But one who is not skilful in

suppressing the hindrances and putting the mind into the mind's casket<sup>21</sup> is called "*not skilful at maintaining*". The other three should be understood in this same way. These four types are obtainers of attainment only. [2299]

Now he said "*four jhānas*" and so on in order to show the jhānas on which these practitioners of jhāna depend. The four jhānas and three releases are made clear in the Commentary on the Dhammasangaha<sup>22</sup>. The meaning of "*release*" amongst the rest of the terms should be understood according to the explanation found there. Furthermore, because of release from opposing states successively at each moment of absorption and because of being intent on the object, seven are called "*release*". But the eighth, because of the release from all perception and feeling, is called the '*release of disappearance*'. [2300]

As regards the "*different types*" of concentration (i.e. '*samādhi*' in Pāli), concentration of the first jhāna in the four-stage or five-stage method is called "*accompanied by the mental factors of initial application and sustained application*". Concentration of the second jhāna in the five-stage method is called "*without initial application and with sustained application only*". Concentration in the three higher jhānas in the four-stage and five-stage method is called "*with neither initial application nor sustained application*". [2301]

As regards the attainments, eight attainments successively are called "*attainment*" and also concentration (or samādhi). Why? Because of the presence of one-pointedness of mind. In its absence in the ninth attainment or "*attainment of cessation*", it is not called concentration. [2302]

"*Corruption*" is the reaching for sense desire etc. of perception and bringing to mind of one who has emerged from unfamiliar first jhāna, etc. [2303]

"*Purification*" is the reaching for the second jhāna, etc. of perception and bringing to mind of one who has emerged from familiar first jhāna, etc. [2304]

*“Purification is also emergence”*: purification is expounded as emergence, since each lower familiar jhāna is the direct cause for each higher one. [2305]

*“Emergence means emergence from this or that level of concentration”*: by this it is life-continuum emerging that is expounded; for the emerging from all jhānas is through the life continuum. But the emergence from cessation is through fruition attainment. This is called the emerging which is not included in the Vibhanga. [2306]

## CHAPTER 9

### **8. What is the Buddha's Eighth Knowledge – The Remembrance of Previous Existences?**

The Buddha remembers manifold former existences, not just one or two but many aeons of evolving, many aeons of devolving and many aeons of both evolving and devolving. He remembers as follows.

“I was in such a place, having such a name, having such a clan, having such a colour, having such food, experiencing such and such pleasure and pain, such and such an end to the span of life; I myself passing therefrom rose up in such a place; there also I was having such a name, having such a clan, having such a colour, having such food, experiencing such and such pleasure and pain, such and such an end to the span of life; I myself passing therefrom rose up here”. Thus, with all qualities and details, he remembers manifold former existences.

To understand the Buddha's eighth Knowledge – The Remembrance of Previous Existence – one must have an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. “Right View”) which requires, amongst many attributes, wisdom, subtlety and the investigation of reality. (829)

## Eighth Power Commentary

In the description of the eighth power, the meaning of “*manifold former existences*” and so on is all given in detail in ‘The Essence of the Path of Purification’ by Dr Ottara Nyana, an abridged edition of Ven. Ñāṇamoli’s translation of the Visuddhimagga. [2307]

A shortened extract from the relevant part of Chapter XIII of ‘The Essence of the Path of Purification’ follows:

5. As to the explanation of Knowledge of Recollection of Past Life, there are six kinds of people who recollect this past life. They are: other sectarians, ordinary disciples, Great Disciples, Chief Disciples, Pacceka Buddhas, and Buddhas.

Herein, *other sectarians* recollect only as far back as forty aeons, but not beyond that. Why? It is because their understanding is weak due to lack of Delimitation of Mind and Matter. *Ordinary disciples* recollect as far back as a hundred aeons and as far back as a thousand aeons because their understanding is strong. *The eighty Great Disciples* recollect as far back as a hundred thousand aeons. *The two Chief Disciples* recollect as far back as an incalculable age and a hundred thousand aeons. *Pacceka Buddhas* recollect as far back as two incalculable ages and a hundred thousand aeons. For such is the extent to which they have accumulated their perfections<sup>23</sup>. But there is no limit in the case of *Buddhas*.

6. Again, other sectarians only recollect the succession of aggregates; they are unable to recollect according [only] to death and rebirth linking, letting go of the succession of aggregates. They are like the blind in that they are unable to descend upon any place they choose; they go as the blind do without letting go of their sticks. So they recollect without letting go of the succession of aggregates. Ordinary disciples both recollect by means of the succession of aggregates and trace by means of death and rebirth linking. Likewise the eighty Great Disciples. But the Chief Disciples have nothing to do with the succession of aggregates. When they see the death of one person,



they see the rebirth linking, and again when they see the death of another, they see the rebirth linking. So they go by tracing through death and then rebirth linking. Likewise Pacceka Buddhas.

Buddhas, however, have nothing to do either with succession of aggregates or with tracing through death and rebirth linking; for whatever instance they choose in many millions of aeons, or more or less, is evident to them. So they go, and so they descend with the lion's descent<sup>24</sup> wherever they want, even skipping over many millions of aeons as though they were an elision in a text. And just as an arrow shot by such a master of archery expert in hair-splitting as Sarabhaṅga<sup>25</sup> always hits the target without getting held up among trees, creepers, etc., on its way, and so neither gets held up nor misses, so too, since Buddhas go in this way their knowledge does not get held up in intermediate births or miss; without getting held up or missing, it seizes any instance required.

7. Among these beings with recollection of past life, the sectarians' vision of past life seems like the light of a glow-worm, that of ordinary disciples like the light of a candle, that of the Great Disciples like the light of a torch, that of the Chief Disciples like the light of the Morning Star, that of Pacceka Buddhas like the light of the Moon, and that of Buddhas like the glorious Autumn Sun's disk with its thousand rays.

Other sectarians see past life as blind men go [tapping] with the point of a stick. Ordinary disciples do so as men who go on a log bridge. The Great Disciples do so as men who go on a footbridge. The Chief Disciples do so as men who go on a cart bridge. Pacceka Buddhas do so as men who go on a main footpath. And Buddhas do so as men who go on a high road for carts.

In this connexion it is the disciples' recollection of past life that is intended.

8. So a Bhikkhu who is a beginner and wants to recollect in this way should go into solitary retreat on return from his alms round after his meal. Then he should attain the four jhānas in succession

and emerge from the fourth jhāna as basis for direct-knowledge. He should then advert to his most recent act of sitting down [for this purpose], next, to the preparation of the seat, to the entry into the lodging, to the putting away of the bowl and [outer] robe, to the time of eating, to the time of returning from the village, to the time of wandering for alms in the village, to the time of entering the village, to the time of setting out from the monastery, to the time of paying homage at the shrine terrace and the Enlightenment-Tree terrace, to the time of washing the bowl, to the time of picking up the bowl, to the things done from the time of picking up the bowl back to the mouth washing, to the things done in the early morning, to the things done in the middle watch, in the first watch. In this way he should advert to all the things done during the whole night and day in reverse order.

While this much, however, is evident even to his normal consciousness it is especially evident to his preliminary-work consciousness. But if anything there is not evident, he should again attain the basic jhāna, emerge and advert. By so doing it becomes as evident as when a lamp is lit. And so, in reverse order too, he should advert to the things done on the second day back, and on the third, fourth and fifth day, and in the ten days, and in the fortnight, and as far back as a year.

When by these means he adverts to ten years, twenty years, and so on as far back as his own rebirth-linking in this existence, he should advert to the mentality-materiality occurring at the moment of death in the preceding existence; for a wise Bhikkhu is able at the first attempt to remove the rebirth-linking and make the mentality-materiality at the death moment his object.

9. But the mentality-materiality in the previous existence has ceased without remainder and another has arisen, and consequently that instance is, as it were, shut away in darkness, and it is hard for one of little understanding to see it. Still he should not give up the task, thinking 'I am unable to remove the rebirth-linking and make the mentality-materiality that occurred at the death moment my object'.

On the contrary, he should again and again attain that same basic jhāna, and each time he emerges he should advert to that instance.

When he emerges from the basic jhāna, instead of adverting to what he has already adverted to he should advert only to the rebirth linking, and at length he removes the rebirth linking and makes the mentality-materiality that occurred at the death moment his object. And this meaning should also be illustrated by means of the woodcutter and the hair-cutter as well.

Herein, the knowledge that occurs making its object the period from the last sitting down for this purpose back to the rebirth-linking is not called knowledge of recollection of past life; but it is called preliminary-work-concentration knowledge; and some call it 'knowledge of the past (atitamsa-nāṇa)', but that is inappropriate to the fine-material sphere.

However, when this Bhikkhu has got back beyond the rebirth linking, there arises in him mind-door adverting making its object the mentality-materiality that occurred at the death moment. And when that has ceased, then either four or five impulsions impel making that their object too. The first of these, called 'preliminary-work', etc., in the way already described, are of the sense sphere. The last is a fine-material absorption consciousness of the fourth jhāna. The knowledge that arises in him then together with that consciousness is what is called 'knowledge of recollection of past life'. It is with the mindfulness (memory) associated with that knowledge that he 'recollects his manifold past life, that is to say one birth, two births ... thus with details and particulars he recollects his manifold past life' (see Digha Nikāya i 81).

11. What is the reason for the world's destruction? The [three] roots of the unprofitable are the reasons. When any one of the roots of the unprofitable becomes conspicuous, the world is destroyed accordingly. When greed is more conspicuous, it is destroyed by fire. When hate is more conspicuous, it is destroyed by water 'though some say that it is destroyed by fire when hate is more conspicuous,

and by water when greed is more conspicuous'. And when delusion is more conspicuous, it is destroyed by wind.

Destroyed as it is in this way, it is destroyed for seven turns in succession by fire and the eighth turn by water; then again seven turns by fire and the eighth by water, and when it has been seven times destroyed by water at each eighth turn, it is again destroyed for seven turns by fire. Sixty-three aeons pass in this way. And now the air takes the opportunity to usurp the water's turn for destruction, and in destroying the world it demolishes the *Subhakiṇha Brahmā* World where the life span is the full sixty-four aeons.

End of shortened extract from 'The Essence of the Path of Purification' by Dr Ottara Nyana.

## CHAPTER 10

### 9. What is the Buddha's Ninth Knowledge – The Passing Away and Rebirth of Beings?

The Buddha, with pure divine eye surpassing that of man, sees beings passing away or rising, inferior or superior, of good or bad complexion, happy or miserable.

The Buddha comprehends beings as faring according to their deeds as follows.

Worthy beings carrying out wrong bodily, verbal and mental actions, revilers of those who have entered the Noble Path to Enlightenment, having false view, performing actions with false view – they, at the breaking up of the body after death, rise up in the woeful unhappy, ruinous state of hell.

Worthy beings carrying out right bodily, verbal and mental actions, not revilers of those who have entered the Noble Path to Enlightenment, having Right View, performing actions with Right View – they, at the breaking up of the body after death, rise up in a happy heavenly world.

To understand the Buddha's Ninth Knowledge – The Passing Away and Rebirth of Beings – one must have an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. "Right View") which requires, amongst many attributes, wisdom, subtlety and the investigation of reality. [830]

## Ninth Power Commentary

In the description of the ninth power, the meaning of “*with pure divine eye*” and so on is all given in detail in in ‘The Essence of the Path of Purification’ by Dr Ottara Nyana, an abridged edition of Ven. Ñāṇamoli’s translation of the Visuddhimagga. [2308]

A shortened extract from the relevant part of Chapter XIII of ‘The Essence of the Path of Purification’ follows:

13. As to the explanation of the knowledge of Passing Away and Rebirth of Beings; *Faring according to their deeds*: moving on in accordance with whatever kamma may have been accumulated. Herein, the function of the divine eye is described by the first expressions beginning with ‘*passing away*’. But the function of knowledge of faring according to deeds is described by this last expression.

The order in which that knowledge arises is this. Here a Bhikkhu extends light downwards in the direction of hell, and he sees beings in hell undergoing great suffering. That vision is only the divine eye’s function. He gives it attention in this way ‘After doing what deeds do these beings undergo this suffering?’ Then knowledge that has those deeds as its object arises in him in this way ‘It was after doing this’. Likewise he extends light upwards in the direction of the [sense-sphere] divine world, and he sees beings in the Nandana Grove, the Missaka Grove, the Phārusaka Grove, etc., enjoying great good fortune. That vision also is only the divine eye’s function. He gives attention to it in this way ‘After doing what deeds do these beings enjoy this good fortune?’ Then knowledge that has those deeds as its object arises in him in this way ‘It was after doing this’. This is what is called Knowledge of Faring According to Deeds.

There is no special preliminary work for this. And as in this case, so too in the case of Knowledge of the Future; for these have the divine eye as their basis and their success is dependent on that of the divine eye.

14. *Revilers of Noble Ones*: being desirous of harm for Noble Ones consisting of Buddhas, Pacceka Buddhas, and disciples, and also of householders who are Stream Enterers, they revile them with the worst accusations or with denial of their special qualities (see Udāna 44 from the Khuddaka Nikāya and Sutta 12 from the Majjhima Nikāya); they abuse and upbraid them, is what is meant.

Herein, it should be understood that when they say. 'They have no asceticism, they are not ascetics', they revile them with the worst accusation; and when they say 'They have no jhāna or liberation or path or fruition, etc.', they revile them with denial of their special qualities. And whether done knowingly or unknowingly it is in either case reviling of Noble Ones; it is weighty kamma resembling that of immediate result, and it is an obstacle both to heaven and to the path. But it is remediable.

The following story should be understood in order to make this clear. An elder and a young Bhikkhu, it seems, wandered for alms in a certain village. At the first house they got only a spoonful of hot gruel. The elder's stomach was paining him with wind. He thought 'This gruel is good for me; I shall drink it before it gets cold'. He sat down on a big piece of wood that people had brought to make a doorpost, and he drank it. The other was disgusted and remarked 'The old man has let his hunger get the better of him and has done what he should be ashamed to do'. The Elder wandered for alms, and on return to the monastery he asked the young Bhikkhu 'Have you any footing in this Dispensation, friend?' – 'Yes, venerable sir, I am a Stream Enterer.' – 'Then, friend, do not try for the higher paths; one whose cankers are destroyed has been reviled by you.' The young Bhikkhu asked for the Elder's forgiveness and was thereby restored to his former state.

15. So one who reviles a Noble One, even if he is one himself, should go to him; if he himself is senior, he should sit down in the squatting position and get his forgiveness in this way 'I have said such and such to the venerable one; may he forgive me'. If he himself is junior, he should pay homage, and sitting in the squatting position and

holding out his hands palms together, he should get his forgiveness in this way 'I have said such and such to you, venerable sir; forgive me'. If the other has gone away, he should get his forgiveness either by going to him himself or by sending someone such as a co-resident.

If he can neither go nor send, he should go to the Bhikkhus who live in that monastery, and, sitting down in the squatting position if they are junior, or acting in the way already described if they are senior, he should get forgiveness by saying 'Venerable sirs, I have said such and such to the venerable one named so and so; may that venerable one forgive me'. And this should also be done when he fails to get forgiveness in his presence.

If it is a Bhikkhu who wanders alone and it cannot be discovered where he is living or where he has gone, he should go to a wise Bhikkhu and say 'Venerable sir, I have said such and such to the venerable one named so and so. When I remember it, I am remorseful. What shall I do?' He should be told 'Think no more about it; the Elder forgives you. Set your mind at rest'. Then he should extend his hands palms together in the direction taken by the Noble One and say 'Forgive me'.

If the Noble One has attained the final nibbāna, he should go to the place where the bed is, on which he attained the final nibbāna, and should go as far as the charnel ground to ask forgiveness. When this has been done, there is no obstruction either to heaven or to the path. He becomes as he was before.

16. Now a clansman who is a beginner and wants to see in this way should make sure that the jhāna, which has a kasiṇa as its object and is the basis for direct-knowledge, is made in all ways susceptible of his guidance. Then one of these three kasiṇas, that is to say, the fire kasiṇa, white kasiṇa, or light kasiṇa, should be brought to the neighbourhood [of the arising of divine-eye knowledge]. He should make this access jhāna his resort and stop there to extend [the kasiṇa]; the intention is that absorption should not be aroused here; for if he does induce absorption, then [the kasiṇa] will become



the support for basic jhāna, but not for the [direct-knowledge] preliminary work. The light kasiṇa is the best of the three. So either that, or one of the others, should be worked up in the way stated in the Description of the Kasiṇas, and it should be stopped at the level of access and extended there. And the method for extending it should be understood in the way already described there too. It is only what is visible within the area to which the kasiṇa has been extended that can be seen.

However, while he is seeing what is visible, the turn of the preliminary work runs out. Thereupon the light disappears. When that has disappeared, he no longer sees what is visible (c.f. Majjhima Nikāya iii 158). Then he should again and again attain the basic jhāna, emerge and pervade with light. In this way the light gradually gets consolidated till at length it remains in whatever sized area has been delimited by him in this way 'Let there be light here'. Even if he sits watching all day he can still see visible objects.

17. Herein, when visible objects that are not within the focus of the Bhikkhu's fleshly eye come into the focus of his eye of knowledge – that is to say, visible objects that are inside his belly, belonging to the heart basis, belonging to what is below the earth's surface, behind walls, mountains and enclosures, or in another world-sphere – and are as if seen with the fleshly eye, then it should be understood that the divine eye has arisen. And only that is capable of seeing the visible objects here, not the preliminary-work consciousnesses.

But this is an obstacle for an ordinary man. Why? Because wherever he determines 'Let there be light', it becomes all light, even after penetrating through earth, sea and mountains. Then fear arises in him when he sees the fearful forms of spirits, ogres, etc., there owing to which his mind is distracted and he loses his jhāna. So he needs to be careful in seeing what is visible (see Majjhima Nikāya iii 158).

18. Here is the order of arising of the divine eye: when mind door adverting, which has made its object that visible datum of the kind already described, has arisen and ceased, then, making that

same visible datum the object, all should be understood in the way already described beginning 'Either four or five impulsions impel...'. Here also the [three of four] prior consciousnesses are of the sense sphere and have applied and sustained thought. The last of these consciousnesses, which accomplishes the aim, is of the fine-material sphere belonging to the fourth jhāna. Knowledge co-nascent with that is called 'Knowledge of the Passing Away and Rebirth of Beings' and 'Knowledge of the Divine Eye'.

The explanation of knowledge of passing away and rebirth is ended.

End of shortened extract from 'The Essence of the Path of Purification' by Dr Ottara Nyana.

## CHAPTER 11

### **10. What is the Buddha's Tenth Knowledge – The Destruction of the Defilements?**

The Buddha, by the destruction of the defilements (i.e. negative tendencies), having fully known, having realized in the present existence, attains and dwells in freedom of mind and freedom of understanding that is not the object of the defilements.

To understand the Buddha's Tenth Knowledge – The Destruction of the Defilements – one must have an awareness of the world as it really is (i.e. "Right View") which requires, amongst many attributes, wisdom, subtlety and the investigation of reality. [831]

## Tenth Power Commentary

In the description of the tenth power, “*freedom of mind*” is a mind free of defilements, and is fruition concentration; “*freedom of understanding*” is understanding free of defilements, and is fruition knowledge. [2309]

This in the first place is the agreed commentary of the teachers. But a dissenter stated: ‘There is no separate knowledge of the Ten Powers; this is only a division of omniscient knowledge’. That is incorrect, for the knowledge of the Ten Powers is one thing and omniscient knowledge is another. For each kind of knowledge of the Ten Powers knows only its own function; but omniscient knowledge knows both that and the rest.

As regards the kinds of knowledge of the Ten Powers:

- the first knows only reasons and non-reasons;
- the second only kamma intervals and kamma-result intervals;
- the third only the delimitation of kamma;
- the fourth only the reason for the difference of the elements;
- the fifth only beings’ inclinations and dispositions;
- the sixth only the keenness and dullness of the faculties;
- the seventh only the jhānas etc. together with their defilements etc.;
- the eighth only the continuity of aggregates formerly lived;
- the ninth only beings’ death and rebirth-linking;
- the tenth only the definition of the truths.

But omniscient knowledge knows both these ten kinds of knowledge and what is beyond that, but it does not perform all their functions.

For omniscient knowledge cannot:

- bring absorption by being jhāna
- transform by miraculous power
- put down the defilements by being the path. [2310]

The first seven kinds of knowledge are of the sense sphere and are accompanied by applied and sustained thought. The Eighth

and Ninth Knowledges are of the fine-material sphere and are without applied and sustained thought. The Tenth Knowledge is supramundane and may be accompanied by both applied and sustained thought; or it may be without applied thought and only with only sustained thought; or it may be without both applied and sustained thought.

Omniscient knowledge is always accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought, is only of the sense sphere, and is only mundane. Thus knowledge of the Ten Powers is one thing, and omniscient knowledge is another. [2311]

## **ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE IS ENDED**

## FOOTNOTES

1. Mahapadana Sutta (M 12)
2. MA ii 27; AA iii 9; cf. PsA 626
3. Although *Ñāṇamoli* both here and at Vis Trsl. p.455 translates “a hundred thousand million” (perhaps for stylistic reasons), the precise figure is one billion (British). The three kinds of *lokadhātu* are respectively  $1000 = 10^3$  *cakkavālas* (in size);  $1000 \times 1000 = 10^6$  *cakkavālas* and  $(1000 \times 1000) \times (1000 \times 1000) = 10^{12}$  *cakkavālas*. It is the last which corresponds to the “field of authority” of a Buddha. See AA ii 340 f. In North Indian Buddhist sources, the third is said to consist of  $1000 \times (1000 \times 1000) = 10^9$ - i.e. one billion (American) *cakkavālas* [LS Cousins].
4. See also variant descriptions of the *antaradhāna* at AA i 87 ff., ii 14; SA ii, 202 ff.
5. Sn iii 6
6. Sn i 10
7. I.e. for bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs.
8. A i 22
9. A i 27
10. Miln 236 ff.
11. See M iii 172; D ii 172 ff.; D iii 59 ff.
12. Bu II 58; J i 14, 44; MA iv 122; AA ii 15; SnA 48; etc.
13. Different readings give *Acela*, *Pippali*, *Pancala*, etc.; the Roman Script Edition has *Pippali*.
14. The Burmese *Yojanā* and *Mṭ* derive it from *vajati*, “to go”, which is more appropriate than from *vāja*, “strong” i.e. “strong on account of dogs” as suggested by *Ñāṇamoli* [Ny Mahāthera].
15. The Roman Script Edition, the Sinhala Script Edition 1932 and the Burmese Script Edition here and above have *brahmavacchasadiso*, “like a Brahma-calf”. Should it be *Brahmavaccasadiso*? See PED under *Brahmavaccasin* where it is rendered “with a body like that of Mahā Brahma”; but under *vaccasin* it is given as “splendour”. There is no comment in the

Ṭikās and in the Yojanā [Ny Mahāthera]. (But see the Ṭikā to DA i 282: *Brahmavaccasi ti uttamasarirabho; suvannābho ice va attho* [LS Cousins].)

16. An abbreviated version of the above with the addition of the “eleven kinds of kamma according to the suttanta method” is given at A A to A Tikanipāta 33 (no. 34 in Ṭikā).
17. Mt: “because of prominence” — they say that this is because of the prominence of applied thought; or “because of prominence” is through such qualities as heroism [LS Cousins].
18. According to Mūlatikā to Vibhanga, those among the devas in second or third place are such as Pajāpati, Varuna, Isāna, etc. [LS Cousins].
19. See Vbh 12-61.
20. In the two quotes from the Vbh text, the editions of Sammohavinodani are wrong. In the Vibhanga Pāli, the first pair which is here commented upon reads:  
*samādhismim samādhikusalo*  
*samādhismim samāpattikusalo.*  
The translation has been amended accordingly. U Thittila’s English translation, too, accords with it (p. 448, §828), though he renders *samāpatti* as “maintaining” [Ny Mahāthera].
21. “Mind’s casket” (*citta-manjūsā*). Mūlatikā to Vibhanga: “This is the continuity of a consciousness (*cittasantati*) purified from the hindrances, etc.; either concentration (*samādhi*) or the subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) [Ny Mahāthera].
22. Asl §§162 ff. and 190 ff.
23. Instead of saying ‘for such is the extent to which they can convey [their minds back respectively]’ we should say: ‘for such is the extent to which they have accumulated their perfections’.
24. A commentarial account of the behaviour of lions will be found in the Manorathapūraṇī Commentary to A. Catukka Nipāta 33. The Visuddhimagga Commentary says *Sihokkamanavasena sihātīpātanavasena ñāṇagatiyā gacchati*’ (p. 408).
25. See Jā. v, 129

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