

**Advantages of Chanting
and
How to Practice
Vipassanā Meditation**

by

Phra Rājsuddhiñānamongkol

*English version produced by
Suchitra Ronruen*

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ISBN 974-8239-76-4

Printed at

Sahadhammika Ltd.,

54/67-68, 71-72 Jaran Sanitwong 12,

Jaran Sanitwong Rd,

Tha Phra, Bangkok Yai, Bangkok.

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Approval

Chanting and paying respects to the Buddha is one of our regular daily activities and way of inspiring reflection in our lives. It leads to growth and benefits for oneself and goodness that can be shared with one's fellow citizens and dwellers of the world, bringing good fortune to all.

May you all, together with your families, every one, practice these chants in order to bring benefit into your lives. You will thereby gain fortune, wisdom, and ever-expanding happiness.

May you also invite your children, nephews and nieces to chant every night before going to bed. If you all do this earnestly and faithfully, the following results can be expected:

1. Your children will be well-behaved.
2. Your children will not argue with their parents, but respect them. They will be aware of their proper position and act accordingly.
3. When they grow into young men and women, they will be good sons and daughters of their parents and good citizens of the country.
4. One who chants and practices regularly will grow in prosperity. He or she will gain wealth, good appearance, virtue and intelligence in accordance with his or her wishes in every way.

Forward

This little booklet is a collection of pieces taken from different sources. The first section, “The Advantages of Chanting the Virtues of the Buddha”, by my teacher, Phra Rājsuddhiñānamongkol, or Luang Poh Carañ of Wat Ambhavan, is a simple introduction to Buddhist chanting and a collection of chants that the author has found to be of special benefit to whoever chants them regularly.

The next section, “How to Practice Vipassanā Meditation”, is essentially a script of a video tape made for meditation instruction at Wat Ambhavan. It is made up of a number of different pieces, which explains the changes in style. The first section is from the script written for the video by Mr. Narin Jarimopas. The section entitled, “Exhortation to Practice”, is from a talk by Phra Rājsuddhiñānamongkol. “Meditation Technique” is once again from the video script. “The Four Foundations of Mindfulness” is taken from a talk by Ajahn Tongasukh, a student of Phra Rājsuddhiñānamongkol. “Walking Meditation” is again from the video script, while “Foundations of Mindfulness” is the continuation of the talk by Ajahn Tongasukh.

The last section of the book, “The Law of Karma in Human Life”, was written by me under a research grant from the National Research Council of Thailand.

I hope this little booklet, a mixed collection of Buddhist teachings, will prove to be valuable to those interested in pursuing the study and practice of the Buddhist path. I would like to humbly and reverentially extend thanks to my esteemed teacher, Phra Rājsuddhiñānamongkol, who has inspired me with the faith to see the book through to its final production, and may all who practice the Buddhist path meet with the peace and happiness that are its proper goal.

Suchitra Ronruen
(Sudassa Onkom)
June 9, 1997

Advantages of Chanting the Virtues of the Buddha

I have noticed that people like to go to see fortune tellers if they experience bad times and perform ceremonies to free themselves of their “bad luck”. I have looked into this and sometimes it does indeed seem that our lives are fraught with “bad luck”, but I have devised this little chanting booklet, and I tell my followers to chant every day the virtues of the Buddha (Buddhaguna) once for each year of their lives and then one more, in order to improve their mindfulness. It has proved to be effective. The chanting begins with “Namo”, then the going for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, followed by the recollection of the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, then the Bahum and Mahākā chants. Having done that, one must then come back to the virtues of the Buddha (Buddhaguna) and chant only that once for each year of one’s age, and then one more. If you are 40 years old, for example, you chant it 41 times. If you are 35, you chant it 36 times.

There was one Christian lady who lived in Lad Prao (Bangkok). She was 51 years old. She was a widow and had one son. She was very wealthy, and had a lot of land in Bangkok. Most of the land by Klong Saen Saep up to Lad Prao belonged to her, hundreds of rai¹. She had sold a lot of it for hundreds of millions of Baht. Her son did not apply himself to his studies. She had sent him overseas to study for a degree in America, but he didn’t do any good with it. All he did was buy himself a car and fool around for three years. He wrote to his mother that he was studying and was almost finished, and could he have another 100,000, another 500,000?

In the end she didn’t know where to go or who to turn to. The fortunetellers said she had to pay money to do the right ceremonies so that her son would apply himself to his studies. She gave them the money,

¹ Rai is a unit of land measure. There are approximately 2.5 rai to one acre.

they did their ceremonies, but her son was the same as before. It just so happened there was a man from Singhburi who worked for her. One day they went together to Nakhon Sawan, and on the way, thinking that I may be able to help, he suggested they make a visit to my temple. She didn't want to go, but he feigned a stomachache and said he had to go to the toilet, so they came in. The man actually went to the toilet. Then he came to see me and asked me to help. At that time I didn't know she was a Christian. He said, "Please help her, she only has one son. She lends me money often". I said, let me see her first. He brought her in to see me, and she told me, "My son has gone to study in America, but he's gotten nowhere. I've just found out that he has not obtained his degree, but has simply been taking all the Thai students around getting them into trouble. I'm on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Is there any way you can help?" Just looking at her face I could tell that her son would definitely get a Master's degree, and then go on to get a doctorate, but why was he failing in his studies?

The method: I told her, "Patron, you must chant, chant the virtues of the Buddha 52 times a day". At that time she was 51 years old. She said, "I can't chant, I'm a Christian". So that day nothing came of it, she couldn't do it. It was 4 or 5 months before she came back, I could remember her face. This time no-one brought her along; she came of her own accord, with two friends. She said, "I give up." I said, "Do it this way, Patron. Go out and buy a chanting book." "I don't want to have a chanting book in the house, can't you just write it out for me? So I had to write it out. Later I got tired of writing out the chanting and had it printed up in leaflet form.

"Here, the Buddhaguna, Dhammaguna, Sanghaguna, Bahum and Mahaka."

"I don't bow to Buddha statues, can I chant this?"

"At your bed, just chant it there."

"But I don't know how to chant."

“Just read it.”

“And how will I know when I’ve reached 52 times?”

“Use match sticks, throw one down for each time. Just start doing it.

So she made up her mind to give it a try. I said, “When you’ve finished the chanting, spread thoughts of loving-kindness to your son. Don’t abuse him, don’t swear at him. Just wish that he attain all that is good, attain happiness and complete his studies successfully”.

In three months she could chant it all fluently. After a while she didn’t even have to use the match sticks. Two results came of this.

First, her nervous disorder disappeared; she could eat and sleep peacefully and was more cheerful. Being able to sleep soundly, her mind was happier. She began to feel that the good results of her actions she had dedicated to her son were getting to him. When a mother sends a dedication of merit to her son she knows it. Her son had been living extravagantly; he kept on asking for money from his mother without so much as a thought for her kindness. That day her dedication of merits reached him. It was six months after she had begun to chant. I wrote it down. That day her son had taken a group of Thai students for a drive, when the car crashed into a lamppost. His friends in the back seat were thrown out of the car, and none of them died or were hurt, but he was crushed into the lamppost. The post overturned, and they had to pay a lot in damages. He was flattened onto the steering wheel and went into a coma and had to go to hospital. Fortunately one of his cousins was a doctor in America. He went to visit, and it seemed that the patient had little chance of surviving. He was on oxygen. The American doctors said he was a goner.

The following day, he opened his eyes and realized he had survived, but he knew he was seriously hurt. He felt like he was going to die, and the

tears streamed down his face. He missed his mother. People are like this, it's only when they're suffering that they think of their mothers. While they're running around having a good time they don't have a thought for their mothers. Even older people, eighty years old, on their death beds and almost on their last breaths, go a little delirious and start asking for their mothers, even if they've been dead for years.

Secondly, the son started to miss his mother a lot. "If mother found out that I haven't been studying how disappointed she would be!" He determined to try to finish his studies as soon as he recovered. When the mother found out she was so happy she came to the Wat and offered a meal.

Eventually when the son had come back from America she brought him here, I gave him a Buddha amulet. He revealed what had happened. After he got well, he began to chant and practice meditation at the Thai Wat in America and studied insight meditation. He finished a B.A. and a M.A. and I knew he would get his Ph.D. as well.

This is the certain benefit arising from chanting. I tell you, children, or anybody for that matter, have to suffer before they'll think of their mothers. As long as they haven't met suffering, if you just keep giving them money, they spend it extravagantly and don't spare a thought for their mothers. They have to suffer before they see the truth and see their own minds and hearts. He came and said to me. "Luang Poh, I never thought of my mother, three or four years I was in America. But in hospital I thought of her, I remembered how she made my food for me, then I came back. Then mother told me that Luang Poh had helped me." He was filled with faith. I told him, "If you really believe me, go and have a haircut right now." His hair was so long, down to his shoulders. So he had a haircut in Singhburi. He told me "I wasted money so badly, millions of Baht." This was a clear example of the benefits of chanting, so I have

made this little chanting booklet. If anybody is having bad luck, chant the Buddhaguna.

Meeting Somdet Phra Panarat of Wat Pah Kaew

One night I had a dream that I was walking in a place somewhere and met a monk wearing a very dark robe. His manner and bearing were dignified and inspiring. Sensing that he was obviously a senior monk, I made a sign of respect to him. He stopped and stood in front of me and said:

“I am Somdet Phra Panarat of Wat Pah Kaew from the Ayudhaya period. I want you to go to Wat Yai Chai Mongkol to find an inscription I made for His Majesty King Naret the Great on the occasion of building the pagoda in honor of the victory over King Maha Uparaja of Burma and his declaration of Thai independence from Hongsawadi. You must go and look at the inscription and remember it for posterity. It’s time for you to go”.

In the dream I accepted his request. He told me where the inscription was to be found, and just then I awoke with a start. It was almost dawn. I went over the events in the dream, and reflected to myself that one who practices meditation and controls his mind at all times does not have purely fanciful dreams. That very day I received news that the Department of Fine Arts, who had been carrying out restoration of the big pagoda at Wat Yai Chai Mongkol, would be completing the restoration of the pagoda by installing the spire, after which the scaffolding was to be pulled down.

So I asked Dr. King Kaew Atthakorn to arrange for the installation of the spire to be postponed another day so that I could have a chance to take some amulets that I had made according to the ancient design from sima

stones found in the big pagoda close to Wat Ambhavan, which had collapsed into the river. I had had them pounded and made up into Buddha amulets, which I wanted to install in the spire of the pagoda.

That day, as soon as I arrived I walked up as far as the steps would take me and I could see a chamber they had made for descending down inside. I made my mind firm, aware that if I slipped on the way down I could die. All the people who went with me were walking about on the upper platform while I went down to the level below. I had a flashlight with me. It was about 9 am. When I got down below, I found exactly as Somdet Phra Panarat had told me in my dream.

Thus it was that I learned that in fact what Somdet Phra Panarat had inscribed on the stone was the *Bāhung* and *Mahākā* chants.

At the end of the inscription were the words, “I, Somdet Phra Panarat of Wat Pah Kaew, Sri Ayodhaya, have inscribed this message as a blessing for His Majesty King Naret the Great”.

Bāhung and *Mahākā* include the chanting of the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, followed by the blessing chants of *Bāhung*, beginning with “*Bahung sahassa ...*” up until “*Duggaha ditthi ...*” That is followed by the “*Mahā kāruniko nātho hitāya ...*” and finished with “*Bhavatu sabba mangalang sabba Buddhā sabba Dhammā sabba Sanghānu bhavena sada sotthi bhavantu te*”. I call this the “*Bāhung Mahākā*”.

Thus I know that the *Bāhung* chant was actually offered by Somdet Phra Panarat of Wat Pah Kaew to His Majesty King Naret the Great to be chanted regularly while he was in the palace and at war, and thus it is that wherever King Naret the Great went to war, he was always victorious and never faltered. Even when he was alone with Prince Mahindra surrounded

by thousands of Burmese soldiers he still managed to be victorious by defeating Maha Uparaja in hand-to-hand combat at Don Chedi. Even when the Burmese army showered cannon fire on him when they came to collect the body of their King, he was unharmed due to the amazing power of this *Bāhung Mahākā* chant which he always recited to himself.

Having seen the inscription stone, I climbed up safely to the mouth of the chamber, I had been down there almost three hours and was covered in dust and spider webs. As I came out a nun saw me and exclaimed, “Lung Poh, you haven’t been down there in the chamber, have you?” I gave no answer.

From that time onwards I have recommended chanting the *Bāhung Mahākā* chant to all those who come to see me. Why? Because the *Bāhung Mahākā* chant is the most valuable of all chants and has the strongest results. It describes the highest victories of our Founder, the Buddha, over Māra, Ālavaka the demon, Nālāgirī the elephant, Angulimāla the murderer, the woman Ciñca, the mendicant Saccaka, the Nāga Nandopananda and Baka the Brahma God. They are victories the Lord attained through psychic powers and the power of his own perfections. Whoever chants them regularly, every day, will always meet with victory, prosperity and fame, he will have mindfulness, and even when he dies, he will go to a good destination.

May you all chant the *Bāhung Mahākā*. Not only will it protect you, it will protect your family. If everybody chanted this chant, our country would be blessed with prosperity, and all the vulgar and coarse people would vanish from our midst.

It is not only King Naret the Great who found the miraculous power of the *Bāhung Mahākā* chant. King Taksin the Great also discovered it, as it is written in an ancient text:

“Once King Taksin the Great had conquered Chandaburi, he realized that the battles to come would be many and long-lasting, so he had a battle flag made in the style of the Ayudhaya flag and invited some monks to chant the *Bāhung Mahākā* over it, and he himself followed in the footsteps of King Naret the Great and succeeded in liberating Thailand from Burma”.

The *Bāhung Mahākā* chant should be chanted in every household. The more it is chanted the more peace and prosperity can be expected.

The Chanting

Begin with *Vandana* (ending with *sadā sothī bhavantu te*) once through. Then chant *Itipiso* as many times as your age, plus one. After that, chant the aspiration, then follow with the transference of merit. When you finish this, you can make whatever wish you want.

Vandanā

(Repeat this chant 3 times)

Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-sambuddhassa

Ti-Sarana

Buddhang saranang gacchāmi

Dhammang saranang gacchāmi

Sanghang saranang gacchāmi

Dutiyampi Buddhang saranang gacchāmi

Dutiyampi Dhammang saranang gacchāmi

Dutiyampi Sanghang saranang gacchāmi

Tatīyampi Buddhang saranang gacchāmi

Tatīyampi Dhammang saranang gacchāmi

Tatīyampi Sanghang saranang gacchāmi

Buddhaguna

Itipiso Bhagavā Arahāṅg Sammāsambuddho

vijjā carana sampanno

Sugato Lokavidū Anuttaro

Purisadamma sārathi

sattā Devamanussanang

Buddho Bhagavāti

Homage to the Buddha

(Repeat this chant 3 times)

Honour to him, the Blessed One, the Worthy one, the fully Enlightened One.

Taking the Three Refuges

I go to the Buddha (the Enlightened One) for refuge.

I go to the Dhamma (the Teaching) for refuge.

I go to the Sangha (the Order) for refuge.

For the second time, I go to the Buddha (the Enlightened One) for refuge.

For the second time, I go to the Dhamma (the Teaching) for refuge.

For the second time, I go to the Sangha (the Order) for refuge.

For the third time, I go to the Buddha (the Enlightened One) for refuge.

For the third time, I go to the Dhamma (the Teaching) for refuge.

For the third time, I go to the Sangha (the Order) for refuge.

Salutation to the Buddha

Such indeed is the Blessed One: He is the Accomplished One, the Supremely Enlightened One, the Perfect Embodiment of Wisdom and Virtue; the Auspicious Path-finder, the Knower of all Realms, the Incomparable Tamer of Individuals, the Supreme Teacher of Gods and Men the Awakened One, the Lord.

Dhammaguna

Svākkhāto Bhagavatā Dhammo
 Sanditthiko Akāliko Ehipassiko Opanayiko
 Paccattang veditabbo viññūhī ti

Sanghaguna

Supatipanno Bhagavato sāvakasangho
 Ujupatipanno Bhagavato sāvakasangho
 Ñāyapatipanno Bhagavato sāvakasangho
 Sāmīcipatipanno Bhagavato sāvakasangho

Yadidang cattāri purisa yugāni
 Attha purisa puggalā
 Esa Bhagavato sāvakasangho
 Āhuneyyo Pāhuneyyo Dakkhineyyo Añjalīkaranīyo
 Anuttarang Puññak khettag lokassāti

Salutation to the Dhamma

The Teaching is perfectly enunciated by the Blessed One, is verifiable here and now, is with immediate fruit, invites all to test it for themselves, leads onward to Nibbana, and is to be experienced by the wise, each for himself.

Salutation to the Sangha

Of good conduct is the Order of the Disciples of the Blessed One.
Of upright conduct is the Order of the Disciples of the Blessed One.
Of wise conduct is the Order of the Disciples of the Blessed One.
Of proper conduct is the Order of the Disciples of the Blessed One.

This Order of the Disciples of the Blessed One, namely these Four Pairs of Persons, the eight types of individuals,
is worthy of gifts,
worthy of hospitality,
worthy of offerings,
worthy of reverential salutation,
and is an incomparable field of merit for the World.

Jaya-Mangala-Gāthā

1. Bāhung sahassa mabhi nimmita sāvū dhantang
Gīri mekhalang udita ghora sasena mārang
Dānādi dhamma vidhinā jitavā Munindo
Tang tejasā bhavatu me jaya mangalāni
2. Mārāti reka mabhi yujjhita sabba rathing
Ghorang panā-lavaka makkha mathaddha yakkhang
Khantī sudanta vidhinā jitavā Munindo
Tang tejasā bhavatu me jaya mangalāni
3. Nālāgiring gaja varang ati matta bhūtang
Dāvaggi cakka masanīva sudāru nantang
Mettambu seka vidhinā jitavā Munindo
Tang tejasā bhavatu me jaya mangalāni
4. Ukkhitta khagga matihattha sudāru nantang
Dhāvāng ti yojana pathangulimāla vantang
Iddhībhi sankhata mano jitavā Munindo
Tang tejasā bhavatu me jaya mangalāni
5. Katvāna kattha mudarang iva gabbhi nīyā
Ciñcāya duttha vacanang janakāya majjhe
Santena soma vidhinā jitavā Munindo
Tang tejasā bhavatu me jaya mangalāni

Stanzas of Victory

1. Mara, the Evil One, assuming a fierce form with a thousand arms, each brandishing a deadly weapon, stormed forward roaring, accompanied by his formidable hosts and riding on his elephant Girimekhala. Him the Sovereign Sage conquered by evoking the might of his exalted perfection of giving, and other virtues. By his mighty triumph, may joyous victory be mine!
2. Even more fiendish than Mara was Avalaka, the impetuous and haughty yakkha who fought a night-long battle with the Lord. Him the Sovereign Sage conquered through enduring patience flowing from his unequalled self-mastery. By his mighty triumph, may joyous victory be mine!
3. Provoked to run amok, Nalagiri, the king tusker, like a raging forest fire murderously assailed all in his path, and struck such horror in them as would Indra's thunder bolt, the irresistible destroyer. Him the Sovereign Sage tamed by sprinkling over him the cooling water of all-embracing love. By his mighty triumph, may joyous victory be mine!
4. With sword upraised in expert hands did the savage robber, Angulimala, pursue the Lord for a full three leagues. Him the Sovereign Sage conquered by his supernatural powers. By his mighty triumph, may joyous victory be mine!
5. Posing as a pregnant woman by tying a piece of wood to her belly, Cinca falsely accused the Buddha with lewd words in the midst of a devout congregation. Her the Sovereign Sage subdued through his imperturbable serenity. By his mighty triumph, may joyous victory be mine!

6. Saccang vihāya matisaccaka vāda ketung
Vādā bhiropita manang ati andha-bhūtang
Paññā padīpa jalito jitavā Munindo
Tang tejasā bhavatu me jaya mangalāni
7. Nano-pananda bhujagang vibudhang mahiddhing
Puttena therā bhujagena damapayanto
Iddhūpadesa vidhinā jitavā Munindo
Tang tejasā bhavatu me jaya mangalāni
8. Duggāha ditthi bhujagena sudattha hatthang
Brahmang visuddhi juti middha bakā bhidhānang
Ñānā gadena vidhinā jitavā Munindo
Tang tejasā bhavatu me jaya mangalāni
9. Etā pi Buddha jaya mangala attha gāthā
Yo vācano dina dine sarate matandi
Hitvāna neka vividhāni c'upaddavāni
Mokkhang sukhang adhi gameyya naro sapañño

6. With his perverted intelligence, the wandering mendicant, Saccaka, invariably distorted the truth. Pretending to be the very banner of learning, he only blinded his mental vision as he went about indulging in intellectual disputations. Him the Sovereign Sage conquered by his illuminating lamp of wisdom. By his mighty triumph, may joyous victory be mine!
7. The gifted by perverted king of the Nagas, Nandopananda by name, possessed great psychic power and was hostile. By instructing the elder Moggallana, his spiritual son mighty in supernatural attainments, the Sovereign Sage rendered the Naga king powerless and transformed him. Thus through a supernormal mode of spiritual instruction intelligible to his kind, did the master conquer the Naga. By his mighty triumph, may joyous victory be mine!
8. Though a deity of great purity, radiance and power, Baka, the Brahma god, was nevertheless in the grip of pernicious views, like an arm tightly held by a snake's coils. Him the Sovereign Sage cured by means of wisdom. By his mighty triumph, may joyous victory be mine!
9. He who, daily without lethargy, recites and recollects these eight hymns of the Exalted One's glorious triumphs, that wise man, having overcome many diverse objects, shall attain the bliss of Deliverance.

Jayaparittang

Mahā kāruniko nātho hitāya sabba pāninang
 Pūretvā pārami sabbā patto sambodhi muttamang
 Etena sacca vajena hotu te jaya mangalang
 Jayanto bodhiyā mūle sakyānang nandi vaddhana
 Evang tvang vijayo hohi jayassu jaya mangale
 Aparā jita pallanke sīse patha vipokkhare
 Abiseke sabba buddhānang aggappatto pamodati
 Sunak khattang sumangalang supa-bhātang suhut-thitang
 Sukhano sumuhutto ca suyitthang brahmma cārīsu
 Padak-khinang kāya kammang vācā kammang padak-khinang
 Padak-khinang mano kammang panidhī te padak-khinā
 Padak-khināni katvāna labhang-tatthe pada-khine.

Bhavatu sabba mangalang-rakkhantu sabba devatā
 sabba Buddhānu bhāvena-sadā sothhī bhavantu te,
 bhavantu sabba mangalang-rakkhantu sabba devatā
 sabba Dhammānu bhāvena-sadā sothhī bhavantu te,
 bhavatu sabba mangalang-rakkhantu sabba devatā
 sabba Sanghānu bhāvena-sadā sothhī bhavantu te.

Buddhaguna

(Repeat this chant as many times as your age plus 1)

Itipiso Bhagavā Arahang Sammāsambuddho
 vijjā carana sampanno
 Sugato Lokavidū Anuttaro
 Purisadamma sārathi
 satthā Devamanussanang
 Buddho Bhagavāti

The Victory Protection

The exalted and compassionate Deliverer, for the welfare of all, fulfilled the Perfections and attained the Summit state of Supreme Enlightenment. By the avowal of truth may triumph and weal be yours!

Victorious under the Bodhi tree, being blissful among the Buddhas, He consummated the joy of the Sakyans by the conquest of Mara at His victory Seat, witnessed by the Earth. Even so, may your victory be blessed with triumph and weal.

The time when people perform a good deed is indeed an auspicious occasion, a bright dawn, a moment well caught in time, and is the right worship of holy people. At that time, all actions of body, speech and mind, and all aspirations become auspicious. Having performed auspicious deeds, they beget auspicious benefits.

May all blessings come to you, may all god protect you;
 By the grace of all Enlightened Ones, may weal ever abound in you!
 May all blessings come to you, may all god protect you;
 By the grace of the Sacred Teachings, may weal ever abound in you!
 May all blessings come to you, may all god protect you;
 By the grace of the Holy Order, may weal ever abound in you!

Salutation to the Buddha

(Repeat this chant as many times as your age plus 1)

Such indeed is the Blessed One: He is the Accomplished One, the Supremely Enlightened One, the Perfect Embodiment of Wisdom and Virtue; the Auspicious Path-finder, the Knower of all Realms, the Incomparable Tamer of Individuals, the Supreme Teacher of Gods and Men the Awakened One, the Lord.

Mettā bhāvanā

Sabbe sattā sukhī hontu
 Averā hontu
 Abbayā pajjhā hontu
 Anīghā hontu
 Sukhī attānang pariha-rantu

Pattidāna

Idang me mātāpitūnang hotu	sukhitā hontu mātāpitaro
Idang me ñātinang hotu	sukhitā hontu ñātayo
Idang me gurū-pajjhāyā cariyānang hotu	sukhitā hontu gurū-pajjhāyā cariyā
Idang sabba devānang hotu	sukhitā hontu sabbe devā
Idang sabba petānang hotu	sukhitā hontu sabbe petā
Idang sabba verīnang hotu	sukhitā hontu sabbe verī
Idang sabba sattānang hotu	sukhitā hontu sabbe sattā

Buddha Vacana

Sabba pāpassa akaranang
 Kusalassūpa sampadā
 Sacitta pariyoda panang
 Etang Buddhāna sāsānang

Attanāva katang pāpang
 Attanā sangkilissati
 Attanā akatang pāpang
 Attanāva visujjhati
 Suddhi asuddhi paccattang
 Nañño aññang visodhaye

Spreading Loving-Kindness to Others

May all beings subject to birth, aging, illness, and death, be happy.

May they be without enmity.

May they be without malevolence.

May they be without physical and mental difficulty.

May they be happy in both body and mind.

May they be able to protect themselves from danger.

Transference of Merits

May this merit accrue to my mother and father, may they be happy.

May this merit accrue to all my relatives, may they be happy.

May this merit accrue to my teachers and my preceptor, may they be happy.

May this merit accrue to all gods, may they be happy.

May this merit accrue to my hungry ghosts, may they be happy.

May this merit accrue to all enemies, may they be happy.

May this merit accrue to all beings, may they be happy.

Buddha's Words

To avoid all evil,

To cultivate good,

To purify one's mind,

This is the teaching of the Buddhas.

By oneself is evil done,

By oneself is one defiled,

By oneself is evil left undone,

By oneself is one purified.

Purity and impurity depend on oneself,

No one can purify another.

How to Practice Vipassanā Meditation

On one occasion, after his enlightenment, the Buddha was dwelling at the foot of a banyan tree by the bank of the Neranjarā River. There the following thought arose in his mind:

“This is the only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering of the right path and to the realization of Nibbāna: that way is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness”.

Thereupon, Brahma Sahampati, understanding in his own mind the Buddha’s thought, vanished from the Brahma realm and appeared before the Buddha:

“All the Blessed Ones who have seen the cessation of birth and the overcoming of birth, who have paved the supreme way in the past, have crossed over the ocean of suffering by this way. And that Blessed One in the present time has crossed over by this path. This path is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness”.

For 45 years following his enlightenment until his passing away, the Buddha’s sole objective was to teach trainable beings how to attain the three essentials of Dhamma: refraining from all evil; cultivating good; and purifying the mind.

The Buddha taught that in order to purify the mind we must contemplate the Four Noble Truths, which are suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the way leading to the cessation of suffering. Once the Four Noble Truths have been thoroughly realized, our minds will be purified and enlightened and we will attain the extinction of suffering, *Nibbāna*.

The way to eradicate suffering or purify the mind is to practice *vipassanā*, or insight, meditation. This is the only way to free people from rebirth and to attain the ultimate truth of Nibbāna.

Vipassanā meditation is not a technique for closing the eyes and seeing magnificent sights or attaining psychic powers. It is the study of life and how to eradicate suffering from one's own life. It also solved the complex problems of life and leads to perception of the truth. The way to practice this is to look into one's own life, to notice the movements of body and mind, to notice whether there are wholesome or unwholesome thoughts in the mind.

The more we reflect on our life and the more we learn about our problems, the more can we reach a solution totally and clearly by ourselves, within our own minds.

We will realize that a life that is void of mindfulness and follows the stream of accumulated habits is vastly different from a life guided by mindfulness.

Vipassanā meditation will lead us from the world of darkness and unskillful habits and free us from the tyranny of lack of mindfulness, in which, through ignorance, we are imprisoned.

From the moment we begin to practice mindfulness it is as if a candle were to be lit in our lives, a candle that shines in our lives at all times.

We often talk about mindfulness and wisdom, and we do utilize wisdom, but rarely do we use our mindfulness, even though it can bring immeasurable benefits to our lives.

Once we begin practicing vipassanā meditation, this small candle starts to grow brighter and brighter, until we are able to see the truths that had previously been obscured.

Exhortation to Practice

Don't neglect your work, the work of meditation. There are five meditation objects; *kesā*, hair of the head; *lomā*, hair of the body; *nakhā*, nails; *dantā*, teeth; *taco*, skin. These are tools for calming the mind. Use them for solving problems. If you don't have a meditation object you will not be able to solve problems, you will find it hard to concentrate the mind. Note "standing" five times, reflecting only on "*kesā*", down to the feet, standing, then to the navel, then stop breathing. Then note "thus" up to the head. You can know the state of your mind. When you see another person walking towards you, you can tell immediately whether he or she is good or bad. But people don't study this. They study everything else, but throw out the essential work of Buddhist practice, they throw out the meditation, that's why they can't solve problems and that is why the world is so confused and agitated.

If you can practice meditation, you note standing, and when you see someone walking towards you smiling, you can immediately sense their real state of mind. They're smiling, but they're coming to claim a debt or to borrow some money. Even friends can cheat each other. Meditation can solve social problems. It is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The Buddha taught that when you see a person walking towards you mindfulness would tell you if they should be avoided. This is one benefit.

The second, secondary benefit is that meditation can solve problems. How does meditation solve problems? It improves the mind. Where is the mind? The mind is at the six sense doors. We have these three channels of

activity: the body, the speech, and the mind. These are the wells of skill and unskillful. The six sense bases are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These are the birth places of heaven and hell, the birth places of mind and body, mental states, and defilements such as greed, hatred, and delusion. Solve problems here. When the eye sees someone who makes us angry, we set up mindfulness at the eye. Our eye is then rich, it is controlled (*silā*). Are you angry? Put anger at the solar plexus, breathe deeply and slowly. A person who is angry breathes quickly. One who breathes deeply will not be angry. This is how we solve the immediate problems with elementary meditation. When you breathe deeply, noting “anger, anger”, wisdom will arise in you and you will be able to solve the problem. Why do you waste your time and mental energy on anger? It is not what you’re meant to do. That is the task of Buddhist practice. If others abuse you, put your mindfulness at the sound. “Sound, sound”. Who are they abusing? They are just abusing themselves, let it go back to them, don’t take it in. Then your mind will be in a skillful state. This is the first way to solve problems with elementary meditation practice. This is how to solve problems by recollecting on your life. You can reflect on yourself, reflect on your mother, father, and benefactors. With meditation you can know the law of karma.

A person who is feeling greed will breathe one way, one who is experiencing anger will breathe another way, and one who is deluded will breathe another way – very fast. Jealous people have very strong body odor. People who have wholesome states of mind, whose minds are at ease and who use meditation to solve problems will not have offensive body odor. Solving problems lies right here, not in the books.

Dear scholars, technology cannot solve your family problems. For this you must use the Buddhist teachings and meditation. When meditation is used for solving problems it is of great benefit. When you can read yourself, teach yourself, and use yourself, you will see your own death, and thus

unravel your fixed views, your mind will become wholesome and you will receive immense benefits. Meditation is the Buddhist teaching that solves problems. There is both learning and insight. If you are depressed by anything, don't let that depression linger overnight. You must get rid of that depression right now. The past is just a dream, the present is the truth, the future is uncertain. Don't go digging up the past, don't worry over other people. What you should do is control your speech wherever you go. Don't be fainthearted, don't go reviving the past. Your duty lies in the present. Don't go grasping after the future and making plans, you will always be disappointed.

Problems must be solved. Buddhism teaches that people should solve problems, not make them. The reason people make problems and cannot solve them is that they throw out the Buddhist teachings, they neglect their true duty, they throw out their social responsibilities, that's why society is so confused and we cannot solve our problems. We must solve problems at ourselves, at the place where they arise. If sadness arises, breathe deeply; put your attention on the solar plexus, and note "sadness, sadness". Right then and there mindfulness will say "Why are you being sad? Sadness is not right, we should correct it right now". You must be able to solve all kinds of problems as I've said. You must note "gladness, gladness". Tomorrow you may be going to receive a million baht, but just note "gladness, gladness". Why? Because you may be disappointed. You should guard against disappointment. If you do not note these things you are being careless. If you are careless, when the things you love disappear, you will be crying and wailing, you won't be able to eat or sleep. You may even want to hang yourself or take an overdose of sleeping tablets.

This is where the practice lies: resisting your moods. That which observes the mind is *sati*, that which knows is *sampajañña*. Look into things for yourself and solve problems for yourself, don't try to solve them at other people. If you are angry at another person, ask why are you angry? This is

only your own bad karma, you are merely showing your own faults. You want the other person to meet destruction but you are only destroying yourself. This is bad karma. This is what I want to impart to you all. This is how to solve problems. You must take responsibility for yourself, your own eyes, ears, nose, and your mouth.

The mouth is very important. Is your mouth controlled? If you do not solve problems at yourself I guarantee that even if you try to solve problems for a hundred years you will not be successful, and you will only meet with bitter disappointment. I leave this with you, your personal responsibility. This is the results of practicing according to the Buddha's teachings; and this is only the beginning.

May you all prosper and be happy.

Meditation Technique

You should have faith when practicing vipassanā meditation in order to brighten the mind, to inspire it in the practice and to remove worries and concerns from the mind.

The first step of vipassanā meditation is the standing posture. Stand with your hands crossed behind your back, the right hand holding the left wrist at the level of the waist.

Stand erect and look straight ahead, but don't tense up. Just relax, be natural, and close the eyes slowly and gently.

Then concentrate and become aware of the whole body in the standing posture, excluding all other thoughts.

Concentrate your attention and be conscious of the present moment, then fix your attention on the crown of the head and sweep down, as if the mind were sinking down through your body, mentally noting “standing”. When the mind is at the level of the navel, stop and breathe deeply, then slowly move the attention downwards from the navel to the tips of the toes. When the attention comes to the toes, note “thus”. This is one cycle.

Then concentrate and sweep the attention from the toes, noting “standing”, up to the navel. When the awareness reaches the navel, note standing and breathe deeply, then sweep the awareness upwards to the crown of the head and note “thus” to complete the second cycle.

Repeat this procedure five times and note the last “thus” when the awareness reaches the tip of the toes. Keep your awareness on the toes.

Meditators should be careful not to fix the mind at the nostrils. Don't worry about the breath or follow the inhalations and exhalations. Try to concentrate and be conscious of the present moment as much as possible, keeping the attention inside, not wandering outside.

After practicing “standing, thus” five times, slowly open the eyes and look at the toes for a moment. When the mind is concentrated, continue with walking meditation.

For walking meditation, concentrate on the toes and start “right going thus” by silently noting “right” while lifting the right foot.

Lift the foot above the floor about 2 inches. The movement and the awareness must be simultaneous and you should be clearly aware of that present moment. Then slowly move the right foot forward. Try to move very slowly and note “going”. Then slowly place the foot on the floor while noting “thus” at the moment the foot touches the floor.

Next, concentrate on the left foot, and do the same thing as with the right foot by silently noting “left going thus”.

In walking meditation, the steps should be about 8 inches apart at the most to help keep your balance while walking. Meditators are advised to walk to the end of the path and put their feet close together with their tips even in the standing posture.

Raise your head slowly then close your eyes, noting “standing, thus” slowly 5 times as explained before.

Open the eyes, look at the toes and turn back while noting “turning thus” 4 times.

For the first “turning”, lift the right foot and turn the sole to the right slowly 90 degrees. For the second turning, slowly move the left foot close to the right one. The third and fourth turnings are the same as the first and second respectively.

When you have turned around, raise the head up until you are facing straight ahead, close the eyes and note “standing, thus” five times. Open the eyes and continue practicing until the time is ended.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Recollection is sati. There are four bases, *thāna*, for the establishment of sati. Sati and sampajañña observe at these four bases. The first base is the body. The second base is feeling. The third base is the mind. The fourth base is called “dhamma”. These four bases are where we put our mindfulness. We observe at these four places and know them as they

really are. For example, when the body is standing we establish mindfulness at the body. They say the mind as it sweeps the body is like a red disk flowing over the body. This is only an analogy. In fact the “red disk” is only an appearance. The mind is not really a red disk because the mind is entirely void of material attributes. It has no color or shape. The mind is simply a point of awareness, it is simply the natural consciousness. We take this point of consciousness and direct it over the body, from the crown of the head slowly down, like a red disk, sliding slowly down. As we direct the awareness down over the body, we note to ourselves, “standing, thus”. We observe from the crown of the head down to the navel, then stop and breathe out once, then direct the awareness once more slowly down from the navel to the feet. This is one cycle. Then we slowly move the awareness up from the feet, noting “standing”, to the navel, then breathe once more, then sweep upwards again, noting “thus”, up to the crown of the head. This is two times. Then we note going down to the feet once more, noting as before. This is the third time. When we sweep once more from the feet up to the crown of the head, this is “four”, and from the crown down to the feet again is “five”. The body is standing and we note it as it is. Our objective is to know things as they occur. When we direct our awareness over the body, our objective is not to see the visual aspect of the body or try to conceive an image of it. We simply direct our awareness over the body and note the feeling as the mind sweeps over the various parts of the body. This is the objective of noting “standing, standing”.

Walking and Sitting Meditation

The next posture is walking. When walking, we note at the feet, “left going thus, right going thus.” Just note the feet. When we have walked for the proper length of time, we sit. When sitting we place our awareness at the navel. We note the feelings that arise at the navel, or in the area no more than two inches away from it. We put our awareness there and note

carefully what will arise there. When the abdomen arises we note it, when it falls we note that. We note things as they actually happen. If we do not yet see clearly we cannot yet meditate, we must train to see clearly first. When we can see clearly – “this is the rising” – we can meditate and note it as it occurs – “rising, rising”. When the abdomen falls we note “falling, falling”. We note things as they arise, we don’t try to make them arise or try to control what’s happening. We just let things flow naturally and note them as they occur. In sitting meditation, when you have finished the walking posture, note “standing, thus” 5 times before sitting down.

While slowly lowering the hands, note “releasing” until the arms are fully extended downward, then slowly lower the body into sitting posture and note “lowering”. When the hands touch the floor, note “touching”. Kneel down slowly and note “kneeling”.

When you have knelt on the floor, slowly move into the sitting posture and note “sitting” until you are sitting with crossed legs, folding the left knee and bending the left foot to the right, and folding the right knee and placing the right foot on the calf of the left leg. Rest the right palm on the left one, the spine erect and straight. Raise the head to face forward and slowly close your eyes.

Be careful to maintain concentration and mindfulness continuously in the present moment.

Then concentrate on the navel.

The area around the navel which is the object of concentration extends about 2 inches to the left, right, above and below the navel.

Concentrate on the movement of the abdomen, rising and falling. When breathing in deeply, the abdomen slowly rises; when breathing out, the abdomen slowly falls.

When you are fully aware of this movement, fix the mind on the navel and watch only the rising and falling of the abdomen.

Don't worry about the breath at the nostrils; watch only the movement of the abdomen.

Foundations of Mindfulness

The second base for establishing mindfulness is noting feelings of pleasure, pain and indifference. This is called the experience of feeling. It can be of three kinds, pleasant, painful or indifferent. When we experience a feeling, we note it as it arises. Is it pleasant or unpleasant? Does it make the mind cheerful or dull? When a feeling arises, we meditate on it. If it is a pleasant feeling, suppose there is a pleasant feeling arising in your leg or in some other part of the body: just direct your mindfulness to that feeling, observing what that pleasant feeling is like and noting "pleasant feeling, pleasant feeling". We keep on noting in this way. The pleasant feeling arises, appears, and then fades away. We must see it like this. When that pleasant feeling has passed away another feeling arises. We note that feeling. Perhaps your leg is numb or painful. When the unpleasant feeling arises we observe it and meditate on its true nature: "numbness, numbness". This is how we meditate on the feelings, noting them as they occur. It is not our job to get angry, averse or attracted to the feelings, we simply note them as they arise. When the feelings change we note them however they are: painful, hot, itchy. We note them just as they are. This is observing the feelings. If the feeling is one of indifference, that should also be noted. For example, when you sit down and the body is making

contact with the floor or the cushion, but you do not perceive the feeling to be hard or soft, hot or cold, it is a feeling of indifference. That is, you sit and your mind is dull: you experience indifference because your mindfulness and clear comprehension have slipped. You should set up your mindfulness and keep on meditating, noting things as they are. Note “knowing, knowing, knowing”, compose your mind and meditate like this, and the feeling of indifference changes to something else. It passes away.

Then we come to the third base. It is the mind (*citta*). The mind is that which thinks and concocts the various moods we have. We must see it as it is. We establish mindfulness and note our mind, we compose it on the solar plexus, and note how it creates and imagines. What kinds of thoughts and moods arise? What state is the mind in? However, it is as we must note it, meditating, “thinking, thinking”. We compose our mind on the solar plexus and note. We simply note it as it is. Our only task is to take note of the actions of the mind. This mind, like the body, is called in Pali *sangkhāra*, which means “that which conditions”. Its function is to create mental impressions. If it was the body, it would be food. The mind concocts all kinds of mental “food”, and some of these kinds of food are beneficial, some harmful. The “cooking” is the action of *sangkhāra*, conditioning. It is like our hands. Our hands have the function of creating, making, working. *Sangkhāra*, the mental formation, have the task of creating mental impressions for the mind to “eat”. When the mind “consumes” these mental impressions it is energized. It receives energy from these mental impressions, which expresses itself in the form of thoughts. However the mind thinks, we must note it at every stage, observing how the mind is thinking. When the mind “eats” these things, what happens?

Thus we come to the last of the four bases – *dhammānupassana* – the base of “*dhamma*”. It is called this because it arises from the mind having “eaten” mental impressions and receiving the energy from them. They

then become natural conditions (*sabhāvadhamma*). For instance, when the mind consumes certain kinds of impressions, a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure arises. This is a dhamma. We should note what kind of dhamma has arisen. It is called *kāmachanda*, sensual desire. When sensual desire arises we must note it. We note that liking has arisen, and meditate in keeping with that condition, “liking, liking”. We note it as it occurs. We also note how it affects our mind: does it make the mind clear or dull and agitated? Does it make the mind happy or unhappy? We must observe this as it happens. This is how sensual desire is. It arises, persists for a while and then disappears, to be followed by another kind of condition. We notice this as it happens.

For example, perhaps *byāpāda*, ill will, arises. Aversion or ill will must have an arising, and it arises because the mind has “consumed” a mental impression. It has received the sense impression from the fashioning, just as before. Once it consumes that sense impression, the mind is energized by the condition known as aversion or anger. Anger arises as a result of something that has arisen in our awareness and we have fashioned around. Anger is produced by the reaction. We note that anger has arisen. We note what anger is like, how it arises, how it persists and how it ceases. We meditate on it, noting “anger, anger”. Once anger has arisen, persisted and disappeared, we let it go, we do not linger over it, it is past.

We continue to look at the mind. Perhaps *thīnamiddha*, sloth and torpor, arise. *Thīna* is sleepiness, *middha* is depression or despondency. We establish our mindfulness on these things, noting what sleepiness is like, how it arises, lingers and disappears. We note it as it really is: is it useful or is it harmful? Note whether the mind that is sunk in sleepiness is bright and cheerful or whether it is dull and lethargic. Try to keep your mindfulness firm, don’t let it slip. Meditate on noting, “sleepy, sleepy”. Sleepiness is impermanent, it arises, lingers and passes away, and you can see it like that.

Then the next kind of hindrance is *uddhaccakukkucca*, distraction and worry. *Uddhacca* is distraction; *kukkucca* is restlessness. It arises at our mind once again. We compose our mind at the solar plexus, and mindfully note the restless and distracted mind. How does it arise, how does it linger, how does it disappear? Is it useful or is it harmful? We observe it as it really is, noting “distraction, distraction” until its transitory nature becomes evident to use. It passes away and becomes the past.

Then the fifth kind of hindrance arises – *vicikicchā*, doubt. *Vici* is doubt, *kichchā* is perplexity, uncertainty. If doubt arises in us we note it. We note how it arises, what kind of conditions leads to its arising? When doubt arises in the present moment, we observe it as it is and meditate on it, “doubt, doubt”. Doubt can arise about everything. Whatever we don’t really understand we can have doubts about. When doubt arises we try to establish mindfulness on it. When we see it as it really is, doubt will be seen to arise, linger and pass away, this is its nature.

This is the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Carrying out this practice we can attain real results. We must use *sati*, mindfulness, and *sampajañña*, clear comprehension, to observe the present moment. Don’t go looking at the past or the future; don’t speculate about the things that arise. Don’t try to analyze them. Our only task is to mentally note and observe things as they arise, and mediate on things as they arise in the present moment.

The Law of Karma in Human Life

By Associate Professor Dr. Suchitra Ronruen

Produced under research grant from the National Research Council of Thailand

In ancient times human beings were surrounded by darkness, they knew nothing of the things around them. When they saw nature going through its changes – the wind blowing, the rains coming and going – they could only surmise that someone was effecting these changes: things happened because someone was doing them. And so arose the belief in the gods, the creators of the changes in nature. There were gods of water, gods of fire, wind gods, sky gods and countless spirits inhabiting trees, mountains and shrines. The way human being related to these gods and spirits was through supplication: asking for the things they wanted and for protection from danger.

Comparing the world of the gods to human society, people reasoned that, like human society, there must be one god who was superior to all the others. This led to the idea, expressed in theistic religions like Brahmanism, that there was one god who was the creator of everything in the universe, including the lesser gods. The emphasis changed from a belief in many smaller gods assigned to certain places or duties in the world, to one great, ruling God. The practical relationship to this God was still one of supplication, as the Creator of all things was the meter out of punishment and reward.

The desire to please the God or gods was formalized into sacrificial ceremonies (*yajna*). At first smaller animals were sacrificed, but eventually bigger ones such as horses² were used so that nobler persons, such as kings, could make sacrifices that were in keeping with their

² Aswa medha – “the horse sacrifice”. See John Dowson, p. 28.

station. There were even human sacrifices performed in the hope of taking this “appeasement” to its ultimate level. In this belief, all man’s hopes were placed with an external agent.

The teaching of Gotama the Buddha sought to change this. The Buddha observed that in putting all their faith in external powers, people were neglecting their own potential and responsibilities. He taught that people should begin to look at how things in nature function according to causes and conditions. If we know the causes and conditions of things we do not have to seek help from external agents, from gods. The Buddha’s teachings shifted the emphasis from clinging to an external controlling factor to understanding the workings of nature, causes and effects, and effectuating changes through human action.

With his teaching of the law of karma, the Buddha was the pioneer of humanism. We can say that his teaching was a declaration of human freedom; human beings could determine their own destinies through their own actions (karma), and no longer have to resort to the gods or the supernatural forces to which, up till then, they had looked for refuge.

Karma (Pali, kamma) literally means “action”; correctly speaking it refers to the wholesome and unwholesome volitions and their concomitant mental factors which cause rebirth and shape the destiny of all beings. These karmic volitions are expressed in wholesome actions in body, speech and mind.

With regard to karmic volitions, the Buddha said, “*Cetanāhang bhikkave kammang vadāmi*” (“Volition, O monks, I say is karma”³), and “*Cetayitvākammang karoti kāyena vācāya manasā*” (“Having intended, people commit actions through body, speech or mind”⁴). Thus, karma

³ A. III. 415

⁴ A. IV. 63

specifically refers to all actions done with volition, and does not include unintentional acts.

Actions committed through the body are called *kāyakamma*, bodily karma; those committed in speech are called *vacīkamma*, verbal karma; and those committed in mind are called *manokamma*, mental karma. However, all actions, even those expressed through the body or speech, are invariably rooted in mind, because intention (*cetanā*), the essential factor in all karma, is a mental factor. Deeds are called *kāyakamma* when they are expressed in bodily actions; they are called *vacīkamma* when they are expressed in speech. There is only one kind of karma which entails neither physical actions nor speech, and that is *manokamma*, such as thinking of someone else with hatred, indulging in thoughts of jealousy or envy. These examples are unskillful mental karma. Examples of good mental karma are thoughts of good will to others, spreading loving kindness to all beings and thoughts of forgiveness.

Thus it can be seen that intention or the mind is the most important factor in the creation of karma, as the Buddha said, “Mind precedes all actions, mind is their chief, they are all mind-made. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox ... If with a pure mind one speaks or acts, happiness follows like the never-departing shadow”⁵.

On the basis of the nature of human volition, human actions are classified as good or wholesome (*kusala*) and bad or unwholesome (*akusala*). When volition (*cetanā*) is deterined by greed (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*) or delusion (*moha*), the threefold roots of unwholesome action, the resulting actions are unwholesome or impure. Conversely, when actions are free from the three roots of unwholesome action, by means of meditation or insight into

⁵ Dhammapada

the Four Noble Truths, they are said to be *kusala* (wholesome). It is also said that as long as actions (good or bad) are done with desire, they are bound to bring good or bad results. From another angle, actions are said to be of three types, “Threefold, however, is the ripening of karma: ripening during the present lifetime, ripening in the next life, and ripening in a further life”⁶.

1. Four Kinds of Karma

According to the Kukkurovāda Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya⁷ and the Catukkanipāta of the Anguttara Nikāya⁸, the Buddha classified karma or action into four distinct kinds, corresponding to their nature and results:⁹

“Four kinds of karma, O monks, I have realized by my own wisdom and then made known to the world. What are the four? They are black karma which gives black result, white karma which gives white result, black-and-white karma which gives black-and-white result, and neither black-nor-white karma which gives neither black-nor-white result, and leads to the cessation of karma”¹⁰.

This classification of karma into four categories is made according to their qualities and results – good, evil, both good and evil, and neither good nor evil.

In black karma, the Buddha was pointing to any form of hostile action performed through body, speech or mind which is aimed at bringing trouble, injury or disadvantage to other living beings. Demeritorious

⁶ A. IV. 63

⁷ M. 13

⁸ A. IV. 321

⁹ Sunthorn Na-rangsi, 69

¹⁰ A. IV. 314

actions such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and false speech, are counted as “black” or bad karma. Black karma also include the five heinous crimes which are said to bring immediate results: matricide, patricide, killing an Arahant (a fully enlightened being), wounding a Buddha, and causing a schism in the monastic Order.

According to Buddhism, man’s existence is largely determined by his karma. A person’s actions will always reflect on his personal life. If the consequent fruition of actions does not arise in the present life, it will surely come in a later one. A person who indulges in black karma will surely suffer the result of those actions.

The second category of karma is the opposite of the first. It is white karma, which produces white results. White karma means good or meritorious actions (*kusala kamma*) performed through body, speech or mind.

According to the law of karma, the effect is always determined by its cause. The manifestation of karma consists in an essential likeness between action and result, cause and effect. This is why the Buddha said,

*Yādisang vapate bījang,
Tādisang labhate phalang,
Kalyāṅgakārī kalyāṅg,
Pāpakārī ca pāpakang.*

“As the seed, so the fruit: the doer of evil begets evil, the doer of good begets good”.¹¹

Likewise, meritorious actions will always yield their appropriate results, such as happiness or physical and mental comforts.

¹¹ S.I.227

Now we come to the third category of karma, “black and white karma”. This type of karma is a mixture of good and evil actions. According to Buddhism, if good and evil actions are performed together, happiness and suffering which are results of such actions will also occur together. By “together” is meant in the same span of time, such as a period of life, or in the same life span. Suffering and happiness cannot arise together in the same instant, as there is no possibility for two kinds of karma, good and evil, to produce results at the same time.

In reality, happiness succeeds suffering and suffering succeeds happiness. This is the truth of human life: happiness and suffering are experienced in succession. No one on earth performs only good or only bad actions. Usually our daily lives are made up of a mixture of both, and so we experience a mixture of both happiness and pain.

In regard to the three categories of karma mentioned above, we can conclude with the Buddha’s words:

“All beings are the owners of their karma, heirs of their karma. Their karma is the womb from which they have sprung, it is their friend, their refuge. Whatever karma they perform, whether good or evil, they will be the heirs thereof”.¹²

The last category of the classification of karma is neither black-nor-white karma giving neither black-nor-white results. The either black-nor-white” karma refers to actions which cannot be counted as good, evil, or both good and evil. From the viewpoint of results, suffering is caused by black karma, happiness by white karma, and a mixture of suffering and happiness by both black-and-white karma. The neither black-nor-white

¹² M. 135

karma does not lead to such consequences, but to the state beyond suffering and happiness, to the exhaustion of all karma, to Nibbāna. This kind of karma, however, should not be confused with the actions of a liberated one, or Arahant. The actions of an Arahant are not referred to as karma but as *kiriyā* (movements), since the defilements (*kilesa*) which condition volitional actions have been absolutely uprooted in such a person.

Considered from the absolute standpoint this last sort of karma cannot be counted as either black karma or white karma, but viewed from the relative standpoint, as it does not generate painful or unprofitable consequences. It may be regarded as a good kind of action. To this interpretation, a distinction should be clearly made that, while ordinary good action leads to rebirth, this category of action leads directly to the cessation of birth. This may be the reason that the Buddha did not include this sort of karma in the white category. He said:

“What, O monks, is the neither black-nor-white karma which gives neither black-nor-white results, and leads to the exhaustion of karma? The volition which is set forth for refraining from performing black karma giving black results, white karma giving white results, and both black-and-white karma giving both black-and-white results, I call neither black-nor-white karma with neither black-nor-white result, which leads to the exhaustion of karma”.¹³

As an example of this kind of karma, the Buddha pointed to the Noble Eightfold Path, the Buddhist principles of practice leading to the cessation of suffering and Nibbāna. The Noble Eightfold Path, when properly and fully developed, will directly lead to emancipation or Nibbāna, a state beyond both suffering and happiness. Black and white karma will always

¹³ A. 314

lead to the formation of new karma. When wholesome action, for instance, is performed, a certain type of good karmic result is brought about.

According to Buddhism, traveling in the Round of Existence (*sangsāra*) will never come to an end as long as craving (*tanghā*), the root cause of bondage, is not eradicated. This craving can be uprooted only by following the Noble Eightfold Path, which is described as neither black-nor-white karma. It is this karma that is said to lead to the arising of contemplative insight (*vipassanāñāṅga*) which in turn eradicates craving.

When all craving is eradicated, emancipation is accordingly won and the Round of Existence is thereby broken. The extinction of mental suffering is realized in this very life through liberation, while physical suffering will last as long as the body lasts. But physical suffering, however strong it may be, will never overcome the mind of an Arahant (one who has attained Nibbāna). All suffering is totally extinguished on the dissolution of the body and the Arahant is at that very moment merged into the final release or *parinibbāna*, a state beyond birth and death, beyond suffering and happiness in the worldly sense, beyond the capacity of reason and the grasp of language, a blissful state which justifies every effort for its attainment.

2. Twelve Classes of Karma

Venerable Buddhaghosa, the writer of the *Visuddhimagga*, or Path of Purification, collected the concepts of karma in the Tipitaka and classified them into three groups, each consisting of four kinds of karma. Altogether they are known as the twelve kinds of karma.¹⁴

¹⁴ *Visuddhimagga*, 601 - 602

Group One: Classification according to the time of ripening.

- 1) *Ditthadhamma-vedanīya-kamma*: karma with results to be experienced here and now or karma ripening during this lifetime. It means karma bearing fruit in this very life. It gives result in the same existence as it was committed.
- 2) *Upajjaya-vedanīya-kamma*: karma with results to be experienced on rebirth or karma ripening in the next birth. It means karma bearing fruit next to the present becoming. It gives results in the existence after that in which it was committed.
- 3) *Aparāpariya-vedanīya-kamma*: karma to be experienced in some subsequent becoming or karma ripening in later rebirths. It means karma bearing fruit in some successive existence other than either the present existence or the next existence. It gives its results in the future as opportunity arises, for however long the round of rebirths continues.
- 4) *Ahosi-kamma*: lapsed karma. It means karma of which it must be said: “There has been karma, but there has not been, nor will there be result.”
If the kind of karma that gives results in the present lifetime cannot give its results in this very life, and the kind of karma which gives results in the next lifetime cannot give its result in the next life, then they are called “lapsed karma”. Only the karma that gives results in further lives never becomes lapsed karma.

Group Two: Classification according to function.

- 5) *Janaka kamma*: productive karma. Herein, what is called productive is both profitable and unprofitable. It produces the material and

immaterial aggregates both at rebirth-linking and during the course of an existence.

- 6) *Upatthambhaka-kamma*: consolidating karma. This kind of karma cannot produce result, but when result has already been produced in the provision of rebirth-linking by other karma, it consolidates and extends the pleasure or pain that arises.
- 7) *Upapīlaka-kamma*: frustrating karma. When result has already been produced in the provision of rebirth-linking by other karma, frustrating karma obstructs the pleasure or pain that arises and does not allow it to last.
- 8) *Upaghātaka kamma*: supplanting karma. This karma is itself profitable or unprofitable and it supplants other, weaker karma, preventing its arising and usurping that karma's opportunity in order to cause its own result. But when the opportunity has thus been furnished by the other karma, it is the supplanting karma's result that is said to have arisen.

Group Three: Classification according to the priority result.

- 9) *Garuka-kamma*: weighty karma. When there is both weighty and non-weighty karma, it is the weightier karma which takes precedence in ripening. Weighty karma can be profitable (such as that resulting in the exalted spheres) or unprofitable (such as matricide or patricide).
- 10) *Ācinnaka-kamma*: habitual karma. Likewise, when there is habitual and non-habitual karma, the more habitual takes precedence in ripening. Habitual karma can be good or bad.

- 11) *Āsanna-kamma*: death-threshold karma. Karma remembered at the time of death will condition the birth.
- 12) *Katattā-kamma*: This is often-repeated karma that is not included in the foregoing three kinds of karma. It brings about rebirth-linking if the other kinds fail.

The succession of karma and its result in the twelve classes of karma is only clear in its fullness to the Buddha's knowledge, not the disciples.¹⁵ But the succession of karma and its results can be known in part by one practicing insight. That is why this explanation of differences in karma is given in brief.

Venerable Buddhaghosa also explained this in his work, the *Visuddhimagga*.¹⁶

“This is how one man discerns mentality-materiality by means of the round of karma and the round of karma-result, applying this twelve-fold karma classification of the round of karma.”

“When he has thus seen by means of the round of karma and the round of karma-result how mentality-materiality's occurrence is due to a condition, he sees that as now, so in the past, its occurrence was due to a condition by means of the round of karma and the round of karma-result, and that in the future its occurrence will be due to a condition by means of the round of karma and the round of karma-result. This is karma and karma-result, the round of karma and karma-result, the occurrence of both karma and karma-result, and the continuity of both karma and karma-result, action and fruit of the action:

¹⁵ Because it is a specialty of the Buddha and because it is the province of the knowledge that is not shared by the disciples (see Ps.i.121f), it is called “not shared by the disciples”. That is why it can only be known in part, it cannot be all known because it is not the province of such knowledge. (Pm, 772)

¹⁶ *Visuddhimagga*, P.621

Karma-result proceeds from kamma, result has karma for its source. Future becoming springs from karma, and this is how the world goes around.

This is why the Buddha said *kammunā vattatī loko*, “All sentient beings are dependent on their karma.”¹⁷

3. The Law of Karma

The law of karma is described in the Cūlakammavibhanga Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, where the Buddha, according to the Sutta, dwelt in Jetavana, the monastery offered by Anāthapindika near the city of Sāvathī. There a young Brahmin approached him and put to him these questions about the disparity of qualities among human beings:

“What, revered Gotama, is the reason, what is the cause, that among human beings there are found both deprivation and excellence? Why, O Gotama, are humans beings both short-lived and long-lived, sickly and healthy, ugly and beautiful, weak and powerful, poor and wealthy, born in low stations and high stations, stupid and intelligent? What is the reason, Revered Gotama, what is the cause that among human beings there are found both deprivation and excellence?”¹⁸

The Buddha replied:

“Owners of their karma, O young man, are all beings; heirs of their karma are they. Their karma is the womb from which they have sprung; their

¹⁷ M. 13, 648

¹⁸ M. 14

karma is their friend, their refuge. Karma it is that marks off living beings as deprived and excellent”.

In this same Sutta, the Buddha continued to explain the cause of karma and the result that is always dependent on its cause which can be concluded in fourteen cases, or seven pairs, as follows:

1. Killing living beings leads to a short life; non-killing leads to longevity.
2. Harming others leads to sickliness; non-harming leads to a healthy life.
3. Irascibility, anger and hatred lead to unpleasant features and bad complexion; non-irascibility, non-anger, and non-hatred lead to pleasant features, beauty and attractiveness.
4. Envy leads to lack of influence; non-envy leads to influence.
5. Selfishness leads to poverty; alms-giving and generosity lead to wealth.
6. Haughtiness leads to low social status or birth in a low class; humility and gentleness lead to social status or birth in a high class.
7. Lack of interest in acquiring new knowledge leads to stupidity; keenness in acquiring new knowledge leads to acuteness and high intelligence.

The workings of the law of karma are so intricate that it is not always possible to attribute a specific cause to a specific result. The law of karma does provide answers to the mysterious problems of human differences, as far as the ability of our rational thinking can reach, but, as we have pointed out previously, the function of karma is very complicated and mysterious, and it is therefore not possible for all of its aspects to be fully comprehended. There are still delicate problems which require very careful consideration.

According to Buddhism, the same evil karma may produce different results in two different performers. This depends on the mental qualities of each individual which condition the power and efficacy of karma in

rendering consequences. This point of view is clearly discussed in the Anguttara Nikāya of the Pali Canon¹⁹. According to this source, the Buddha is reported to have explained to his disciples that it is possible for a person who does some slight deed of wickedness to be born in Hell, while another person doing the same action, instead of being led to Hell, reaps the fruits in his present life. When the slight vicious karma of the latter produces its fruit, he will experience lesser fruition than the actual result which that karma would have generated. To this the Buddha explained:

“What kind of individual, O monks, is it whose slight deed of wickedness brings him to Hell? Whenever, O monks, an individual is not proficient in the training of his body, is not proficient in concentration, is not proficient in wisdom, is of limited quality and bounded, and abides in what is finite and of lesser consequence, such an individual, O monks, is he whose slight deed of wickedness brings him to Hell”.²⁰

The Buddha continued to explain that if, on the contrary, an individual is well-trained in body, concentration and wisdom, and is not limited in quality, nor bounded, and also abides in the universal²¹, he, having done the same slight deed of wickedness, expiates it in his present life, and when his deed does produce fruit, he will be less affected by it.

This indicates that a person’s inner good qualities can be a condition in the fruition of demeritorious karma. It means that if an individual who performs a slight evil action possesses little or no virtues, that vicious karma has enough power to send him to Hell. But if another individual who has enormous good qualities does the same evil deed, the power and efficacy of that deed in producing results is reduced; i.e. its power is

¹⁹ A. III. 324

²⁰ A. III. 321

²¹ “To abide in the universal” here means “to have unlimited loving-kindness (mettā) and compassion (karunā) towards all living beings”.

strong enough only for bearing fruit in this present life and becomes exhausted. It is not strong enough to lead to rebirth in Hell. The Buddha explained this difference with the simile of salt and water:

In the first case, the Buddha compared the person with less or no good qualities, who performs a slight evil action, to a small cup of water into which a lump of salt is placed. The water quickly becomes salty and undrinkable. This is because the water in the cup is of small quantity. The second case, the person of much good quality who performs a slight evil action, is compared to the water in the River Ganges into which a lump of salt is placed. The water is virtually unaffected by the salt.

Buddhism states that although evil karma will surely give results, it does not mean that one can do nothing about it. A person with evil karma can counteract that karma by improving himself in the way of goodness. The more meritorious karma is accumulated, the stronger and better adapted one becomes for facing the results of one's previous evil actions. The intensity and the destructive power of unwholesome karma can be diluted only by wholesome karma, just as strong acid can be diluted with water. Thus, according to Buddhism, it is never too late to do good, and anyone who is convicted of his wrong doings and who turns towards goodness, is always capable of attaining virtue.

The manifestation of the law of karma consists, as we have seen, in an essential likeness between deed and result, cause and effect – “as the cause, so the result”. Karma in its moral sense is retribution, a moral law, the working of which cannot be escaped. It is only by its consequence that karma can be accounted as good, evil, both or neither. The Tipitaka's classification of karma is surely made according to its result. Karma and its due consequences are therefore inseparable and knowledge of this is made possible only when it is studied in the way of a cause and effect relationship.

From the above, it can be seen that although the Buddha taught the law of karma over 2,500 years ago, it is still very relevant to the present day. The Dhamma, the teaching of the Buddha, is said to be “timeless” (*akāliko*). The subject of karma conforms to modern knowledge; it is a belief that is extremely appropriate to people of the modern age. When the law of karma is studied and clearly understood, we see how individual behavior has its effect on human society. To take an example that is very relevant in Thailand today, the destruction of the forests, which is rooted in the greed of specific individuals, creates effects that have a bearing on society as a whole, leading to depletion of rainfall, floods, and an increase in air temperature. If those individuals had studied the law of karma from the first, they would be more restrained in their destruction of the forests. Thus the study of karma must be done initially on the mental level. The mind or intention is where karma begins, just as an intention based on greed is the cause for the destruction of the forests.

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