

SPARK

Igniting the Flame of Wisdom

Spark: Igniting the Flame of Wisdom

Original Thai text written by

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Translators' Preface

The original Thai version of this text is entitled “The History of the Buddha.” For the English translation the title, “Spark: Igniting the Flame of Wisdom” was chosen because of the significance of the various sparks that ignited and motivated the Buddha’s wisdom development and ultimately, his holy enlightenment. From the visit to *Kapilavastu*, to the golden tray, to the very identification of right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) as the starting point of all wisdom development, these crucial sparks are all highlighted and emphasized in this text. The metaphor of the flame is also quite telling as wisdom, when cultivated, provides warmth and bright light for a practitioner. Once a flame is lit, it continues to burn just as a practitioner’s wisdom will continue to grow with the right fuel in the form of right views (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

In this English translation, every effort has been made to maintain the integrity and style of the original text by *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño*, which was written in Thai with Pali terms. *Ācariya Thoon*’s writing technique is very distinctive as he makes indirect statements rather than attributing actions to a particular individual. This can be difficult to translate as the greatest discrepancy between the Thai and English languages is the prevalence of the English personal pronoun and the Thai’s lack thereof.

In addition, many Pali terms have multiple definitions such as *paññā* which denotes wisdom, insight, knowledge, and thought. As such, some Pali terms were used consistently throughout this

text, while others were translated in order to better capture the essence of the situational definition.

“Spark: Igniting the Flame of Wisdom” was the last book *Ācariya Thoon* authored before his passing in November of 2008. He felt it was important to translate this text into English in order to provide as many people as possible with the logical and uncommonly known truth of The Buddha’s history. *Ācariya Thoon* always emphasized the cultivation of wisdom (*paññā*), and each time this text is read, new truths can be illuminated that fuel our individual insight-wisdom development.

May all of the efforts of those involved in this translation bear fruit as this book serves as a spark that ignites the flame of wisdom in the *dhmma* practice of the reader.

The Translator

San Francisco, USA

Author's Preface

The book you are about to read, “Spark: Igniting the Flame of Wisdom,” concerns the history of the Buddha. This topic has been written about in many countries. In various parts, some are alike, while some are not. Thus, I have written this from yet another angle in order for you all to understand. Although there may be some discrepancies, the main takeaway is the enlightenment of the Buddha and the parallel for internalized reflection that he used. The texts in existence lack clarity as to which resources the Buddha employed to teach himself. From this text you all will be able to understand the importance of the golden tray.

The Buddha utilized the golden tray as a parallel to reflect on his own mind. He used discernment to generate wisdom, which is deemed righteous perception (*ñāṇa-dassana*), and experiences according to the truths of the world. By producing contentment and strong attachment to worldly pleasures (*kāma-guṇa*), insatiable desires serve as the root and factors of birth. This is the very cause of endless rebirth for humans in the Three Realms. The Buddha used the insight-wisdom that arose to cut off the force of desire from his conscious.

In that very moment The Buddha generated the correct perception of the truth (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Thus, he proclaimed to himself that the method used for enlightenment as a Buddha was individually known with mindfulness, concentration, and discernment (*paññā*). No one was his master. This indicates that the correct perception of the truth (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and the right

motive (*sammā-saṅkappa*) are the starting point for *dhamma* practice.

I hope that you all read this book with mindfulness and discernment, while using reason for contemplation. You will understand the history of the Buddha, along with the method and resources used to practice *dhamma* that are aligned with the path to enlightenment.

Phra Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño

The History of the Buddha

The history of the Buddha is read by Buddhists throughout the world. The existence of similarities and differences in writing is attributed the discrepancies in perception. Younger generations read and understand according to those very perceptions. In some countries there is partially sufficient evidence, while in other countries there is not.

In the year 1962, I had the opportunity to cross the border to Laos and stayed at the Dong Na Chok Temple. I like to study, and I had come across a bookshelf containing an old copy of the Pali Canon (*Tipiṭaka*) written on dried palm leaves. It was written in the Laotian language and there were many copies of the book carefully wrapped in cloth. Once I unwrapped the covering, it was obvious the book was the Buddha's history. I was interested in investigating whether or not the Laotian and Thai versions would differ. There were many elements that diverged, while others were similar. This text will not delve into some of those differences.

In 2004, I visited Luang Phra Bang for the purpose of searching for old versions of the Buddha's history, but I could not find any. I asked many elder monks where these older copies were stored and they replied that the books were destroyed during the change in government. The copies we have left in the present are Thai versions written in the Laotian language.

After reading the Laotian version of the Buddha's history at that time, I clearly remembered what I had read because of its reason and credibility. I will present selections that I believe are important for the reader to acknowledge. I would like to highlight the story

of *Prince Siddhattha's* ordination as an ascetic. This account differs slightly from the Thai version. I believe those of you who are knowledgeable will rationally acknowledge this, as Buddhism in each country has portrayed this differently. Whichever version is the most credible in terms of reason should be considered.

When the Buddha was alive, **he stated that in the distant future, there will be dissent among Buddhist views. The written foundations of the Buddha's teachings will both deviate and be incorrect. Therefore, Buddhists in that era will misunderstand the Buddha's teachings a great deal. Those who practice in that age will be confused. Initiation of *dhamma* practice will not be based on the same foundations that the Buddha had delineated.** As illustrated in *Kālāmā Sutta* ("How to Deal with Doubtful Matters"), the issue of belief is comprised of ten categories. In one of the ten, **the Buddha stated one should not believe in written manuals or scriptures.** This implies the Buddha instructed the use of weighing pros and cons in evaluating the trustworthiness of *dhamma*. With the proper understanding of cause and effect, decide whether or not to subscribe to a belief. Even if teachings are attributed to the Buddha, it is merely a writer's claim. Readers must use careful examination to prevent potential problems in the future.

I will expound on *Prince Siddhattha's* ordination as an ascetic. In regards to what actually transpired, I will leave that up to the reader to decide what to believe. This account is derived from the Laotian version, which differs slightly from the Thai rendition. I hope that intellectual readers use their aptitude to realize that some sections are similar, while others differ from the Thai

version. The parts that differ are the Buddha's history according to the Laotian records. Please understand this accordingly, so that rational comparisons can be made.

Life as a Child and Young Adult

According to records from that time, the Buddha was five days old when he received a prophecy from eight Brahmin scholars. Seven of the eight scholars prophesized that if *Prince Siddhattha* were to become a ruler, he would be a mighty king. If he were to ordain as an ascetic he would become a Buddha, supreme in the Three Realms (*kāmaloka*: the world of sense desire, *rūpaloka*: form-sense sphere, and *arūpaloka*: formless, immaterial sphere). He would bring *dhamma* (truth) to the people, and many would become *ariya-puggala* (one who attains one of the four levels of holiness on the path to *nibbāna*) and enter *nibbāna* (ultimate emancipation from rebirth). The seven Brahmins predicted similar occurrences and confirmed that *Prince Siddhattha* would fall under the dual prophecy with certainty. However the eighth Brahmin, the young *Koṇḍañña*, analyzed the characteristics of *Prince Siddhattha* and pointed a single finger upward. He prophesized, “***Prince Siddhattha* will not be a world monarch. He will unequivocally ordain and attain enlightenment as a Buddha.**”

Upon receiving the prophecies, *King Suddhodana* felt uneasy as he had aspirations for his son to continue his rule as a royal king. In the following period, as his son grew older, *King Suddhodana* sent him to be educated at *Takkasilā* with the teacher *Visavāmitta*. Once *Prince Siddhattha* completed his courses on the *Brahmanic* canon of religious teachings and the eighteen curriculums on royal governance, he returned to *Kapilavastu*. He was a teenager, sixteen years of age. *King Suddhodana* was extremely worried, as he was constantly reminded of *Brahmin Koṇḍañña*’s prophesy

in which his son would not become a world monarch. So *King Suddhodana* plotted to enchant *Prince Siddhattha* with earthly effects. He figured that as a teen, the presence of beautiful women would steer thoughts of ordination far from *Prince Siddhattha's* mind.

Thus, the king built palaces and arranged for attractive young maidens to tend to *Prince Siddhattha's* every need, day and night. There were performances of dance, song, and music from a plethora of instruments. Bliss and enjoyment reigned throughout both day and night. There were sixty thousand beautiful women for the prince to choose from. *Prince Siddhattha* enjoyed himself according to the king's plan to enrapture him with worldly pleasures. Three palaces were constructed for each of the three seasons – hot, rainy, and cold. These were all encompassed in the king's plan, of which *Prince Siddhattha* was oblivious.

Then, *King Suddhodana* arranged a marriage between *Prince Siddhattha* and *Princess Yasodharā*. The king hoped that an heir would soon be born to his son, and he would be completely enthralled with his wife and son. Thus the saying,

<i>“Putto gīve</i>	A child as a trap around the neck,
<i>Dhanarñ pāde</i>	Worldly possessions tied to the leg as an anchor,
<i>Bhariyā hatthe</i>	A spouse as a rope pulling on the wrist.
	Whoever can undo these three traps will be liberated from the cycle of rebirth.”

The king was convinced that these three traps would be certain to tie down the prince. Each night and each day, *Prince Siddhattha* would be pleased with the world, while remaining completely unaware. The king continued to plot to build palace walls that were thick and strong. There would be four entrances, each with three gates. Each gate required the strength of eight people in order to be opened or closed. There were two hundred guards at each entrance. Each of them worked for the king, guarding the palace and especially *Prince Siddhattha*.

Specific and definite instructions were given: Whichever corresponding door the prince used to venture out on his own would be the one in which all those guards would be executed. Mandates were to only come from the king. Guards were to stand on duty twenty-four hours of the day. This method was used to prevent *Prince Siddhattha* from leaving the palace walls. Calling it a VIP prison would not be inaccurate. If things transpired according to plan, *Prince Siddhattha* would not ordain as an ascetic. When the king aged, *Prince Siddhattha* would assume the throne. Under these circumstances, *Prince Siddhattha* was completely unaware of his father's plans. At this time there was no cause or reason that would indicate that *Prince Siddhattha* would be ordained. Many years passed and *Princess Yasodharā* gave birth to a son named *Rāhula*.

From this point forward, be alert and use reason for contemplation because this version of the Buddha's history is derived from the Laotian renditions. The Laotian version of the Buddha's history, which I will begin to explain, will slightly differ from the Thai version. However, it will share some features with the Thai

account. I will describe both of them in parallel in order for the story to be complete and rich in cause and effect.

Given that the king, by building a palace and prolonging the time, found a way to prevent the prince from ordaining, you must pay careful attention to discover the true cause behind his ordination. Thus far, the prince had visited his father once a month. Before each visit, a messenger would be sent beforehand to inform the king of the prince's intent to visit. Only when the king permitted would the visit commence as planned. Each visit would be taken with either a small or large group, but always with *Princess Yasodharā's* accompaniment. The king would send a message to inform the guards of *Prince Siddhattha's* plan to visit him. Under no other circumstances were the gates to be opened for the prince to venture out on his own. The king, fearing that *Prince Siddhattha* would escape and ordain as an ascetic, used his authority to enforce this.

Visit to *Kapilavastu*

Once the prince reached twenty-nine years of age, it was during this very period that the merit and perfections (*pāramī*) that he had cultivated met with his aspiration to become a Buddha. One day, *Prince Siddhattha* paid his father a royal visit to ask for permission to visit *Kapilavastu* and see how the people lived. Since his birth, he had never seen the city of *Kapilavastu*. At this point, the king was troubled and afraid his son would be exposed to undesirable sights. He might even become jaded from those sights and his mindset might veer towards ordination. The king responded, “My *Prince Siddhattha*, I am not prepared for this visit to *Kapilavastu*. When I am ready, I will send you a message.” *Prince Siddhattha*, *Princess Yasodharā*, and their court returned to their palace.

During this time, *King Suddhodana* was filled with anxiety and concern. Since *Prince Siddhattha* resolved to visit *Kapilavastu*, there would be repercussions if the king refused to allow this. Thus, the king delayed his reply. *King Suddhodana* then called a meeting of his council and counselors. In order to facilitate discussion, he relayed to them the story of how *Prince Siddhattha* asked to visit *Kapilavastu*. There was unanimous agreement that it would be appropriate for *Prince Siddhattha* to go. This was justified by his age and the fact that he already had a wife and a son. In addition to palaces that afforded a multitude of comforts, he was also enraptured with possessions, status, praises, and sensual pleasures. It was unlikely he had entertained the thought of ordaining as an ascetic. Everyone agreed it would be suitable for *Prince Siddhattha* to visit *Kapilavastu*.

From that point, *King Suddhodana* sought advice from his council about the manner in which the visit would transpire. What would be a suitable course? Everyone agreed that the pathway must be attractive, with an abundance of flowers and flags waving at every location, because there would be many people in the procession. It was subsequently announced to all the people in each county within the borders of *Kapilavastu* that their collaboration was needed to give the streets a facelift for *Prince Siddhattha's* visit.

People received the news and came from all areas to assist in the effort. Because everyone was happy and willing to help out, the beautification of the pathway was completed rapidly. Arrangements were made according to caste – *Kshatriya*, *Brahmin*, *Vessa*, and *Sudda* – as suitable. They coordinated a separate area for the old and the sick to welcome the prince. A brick tunnel with holes was fashioned. Everyone was to stay within the tunnel to view *Prince Siddhattha*, *Princess Yasodharā*, *Rāhula*, and their followers. Once everything was organized and orderly, *King Suddhodana* sent a message to *Prince Siddhattha* stating the date and time of the visit arranged for *Prince Siddhattha*, *Princess Yasodharā*, *Rāhula*, and their followers. This was also formally announced to every single one of the countless residents of *Kapilavastu*. On this particular day, what will happen to *Prince Siddhattha*? Pay careful attention in order to understand the origination of *Prince Siddhattha's* decision to ordain as an ascetic.

Once the date arrived, masses of people hailing from every town, village, and county came to receive the prince. The designated officials, police, and soldiers put forth every effort into

orchestrating a warm welcome according to *King Suddhodana's* specifications. For the old, ailing, or weak, walking amongst the crowds could result in a loss of life. Thus, a separate arrangement was made for these people. Since *Prince Siddhattha's* birth, the people had never laid eyes on him or *Princess Yasodharā*. Everyone awaited the arrival of the three without a blink of the eye.

When it was time, *Prince Siddhattha*, *Princess Yasodharā*, and *Rāhula* arrived in a decorated and fragrant vehicle. Soldiers, personal servants, and courtesans followed closely. The procession was immensely beautiful and the crowd raised their hands in the lotus position. Without missing a single beat, they continuously and loudly bellowed in a resonating unison, “*Saddhu, Saddhu.*” This was a historical moment for the human beings in that era. Wherever the procession arrived, there were people with hands raised in the lotus position chanting, “*Saddhu, Saddhu.*”

Now comes the point of paramount importance. The old and ailing were crowded within the tunnel, with an insufficient number of peepholes. People fought, pulling on one another, for a chance at a viewing. The weak, due to their old age, and the sick, already weakened from their conditions, both wanted to participate in the viewing like everyone else. So they climbed on top of other people in order to see, and when their strength gave out they fell, turning into a ladder for others to step on in order to have a glimpse of the prince. They were already weak and sick, and to add insult to injury, people were literally crushing and trampling them. People died in droves. Those with sufficient

energy ascended to the top of the human ladder, while those who were already in the process of viewing would not give up their spots.

They yelled at each other and the loud resonance escaped from the tunnel, “I want to see, too! I want to see, too!” There was a thunderous clash from the dichotomic sounds of “Saddhu, Saddhu” and “I want to see, too! I want to see, too!” As the heavenly beings (*devas*) had intended, the reverberation of, “I want to see, too! I want to see, too!” traveled to the Prince’s ear. The sounds did not disappear. *Prince Siddhattha* did not know who the sounds of, “I want to see, too! I want to see, too!” belonged to, nor what it was that they desired to see. He asked his charioteer, “*Channa*, this sound which I am hearing, ‘I want to see, too! I want to see, too!’ who are they and what do they want to see?”

Channa replied, “This is the sound of the elderly and the ailing who have been separated into the tunnel. Everyone wants to get a good look at you, and there aren’t enough viewing holes in that crowded space. That is why they are yelling, ‘I want to see, too! I want to see, too!’” Once *Prince Siddhattha* heard *Channa*’s reply, he responded, “I came today to see *Kapilavastu* and for its people to see me.”

Prince Siddhattha ordered the police and soldiers who were keeping the peace to fashion a pathway. “I am going into the tunnel. I came on this visit so that everyone could see me. It is not acceptable to block out these people.” Then *Prince Siddhattha* and *Channa* entered the tunnel. Once inside the tunnel, **the**

prince was shocked at the striking dichotomy¹. He experienced a solemn awakening and empathized with all those people. He had seen with his own eyes, the old, ailing, and dead, all in one place.

1. The dichotomy between the attractive and young people and the old, sick, and dead people in the tunnel was stunningly evident. Prior to the *Kapilavastu* visit, the two were intermingled, undifferentiated, and were considered normal. During the visit, the physical separation made the dichotomic reality obvious, and the prince was able to see the truth of the world.

Encountering the Four Divine Messengers

At that moment, the king of *devas* (celestial, heavenly beings) ordered *Phra Visanukamma* from the *deva* world to appear as a meditating ascetic in that area. The prince clearly saw, and was the only one able to see, this vision. **Prince Siddhattha's seeing the old, ailing, dead, and ascetic all in one place, is called the four divine messengers.** Once he encountered the four messengers, he guarded his emotions and appeared composed, as he was a prince. Even back at the vehicle, the prince put on a calm facade in order to hide his true thoughts from his wife and followers. The vision the prince had experienced stood out in his mind at all times. After the completion of the *Kapilavastu* visit, the prince returned to his palace. All his life, he had never reflected on the old, ailing, or dead. With each day and night, he had been consumed only with worldly sense pleasures.

Once back at the palace, he guarded his thoughts such that *Princess Yasodharā* could not catch on. There was one thing that was out of custom for the prince. He did not visit the courtesans to delight in their dancing and musical compositions as was usual. But this was not given a second thought, as it was assumed the prince was physically and mentally fatigued. He just needed some time to rest. His speech was not as cheerful nor did he smile as usual. *Princess Yasodharā* and the courtesans did not know what had caused this to happen.

There was one other unconventional thing. Once the prince awakened from his sleep, he would pace back and forth. During this period, the prince deliberated over the images of the old,

ailing, and dead people in order to revive his memory. In the past, the prince had seen old, sick, and dead people, but considered it to be normal and did not think much of it. But this time, the prince could not help but think about these things. He continued to reflect upon what he had seen.

He knew that it was more than common that people aged, got sick, and died. The prince further probed this matter to investigate whether there was a way for people to prevent aging, sickness, and death. There must be a solution. It was likened to how day must accompany night and cold was the opposite of hot. These were things that could cancel each other out. Thus birth, aging, sickness, and death must also have a method of cancellation. The prince thought about this and considered it for quite a bit.

The prince delved deeper. Considering the topic of birth, he strove to identify its cause. It was in this very quandary that the prince could not find an answer. He expended considerable effort searching for the answer. During that time, the prince realized that while he saw the old, ailing, and dead, he also saw an ascetic sitting in peaceful meditation. “If I were an ascetic in a serene and quiet environment, I may be able to know the cause and factors of human birth.” That night, the prince felt an irresistible desire to ordain as an ascetic, and he sought out a way to do so.

That night, it was late and hushed, there was a pregnant moon radiating a brilliant bright light as a tender breeze lightly wafted through the leaves and blades of grass. The flowers adorning the palace fluttered gently from time to time. The air was crisp and cold and the fog drifted intermittently with the wind. Stars in the night sky sparkled, while lights twinkled when kissed by

moonbeams. Dew drops dripped from leaves, and crickets and cicada sounded an interwoven melody. The leaves in the forest within the palace quivered eerily. In the hushed night, *Princess Yasodharā* and *Rāhula* were deep in slumber within the palace walls. The room was dimly lit, as *Princess Yasodharā* cradled *Rāhula* in her chest, unaware of what was to transpire in this night. *Prince Siddhattha* slowly walked up to the room in which *Princess Yasodharā* was sleeping. He reached out his arm and tenderly opened the door. He glanced over towards the bed and saw *Princess Yasodharā* and *Rāhula* were sound asleep. So he bid them a silent final farewell.

“My dear Princess Yasodharā, Rāhula. In this night, I bid you farewell. In the past, we blissfully slept beside one another, never once upset. You are not to blame for my circumstance. On this night, I will leave you in order to ordain as an ascetic. If I attain enlightenment as a Buddha, I will visit you. If I do not become a Buddha, I bid you farewell in death. Princess Yasodharā, Rāhula, my infant son, I bid you farewell tonight. I will not return. I bid you farewell, my love.”

Ordination as an Ascetic

Prince Siddhattha walked away slowly, feeling fainter with each step. He turned his face to look at the flickering light in the bedroom of *Princess Yasodharā* and *Rāhula*. He felt such pity for *Princess Yasodharā* and *Rāhula*. He sighed heavily and tears welled up. He was practically unable to take another step. He walked out to see *Channa*, and called for him in a light whisper, “*Channa, Channa*. Wake up. I have pressing business I am leaving for tonight, and I am in a hurry. Quickly, put the saddle on *Kanthaka* and take me out of the palace immediately.” *Channa* awoke and without washing his face he arranged the saddle. *Prince Siddhattha* immediately mounted the horse, *Kanthaka*.

In that moment, *Kanthaka* neighed vociferously three times, the piercing sounds resonating in every direction. Typically, *Kanthaka*’s neighs reverberated as far as eight *yojana* (a distance of approximately eighty miles). Everyone everywhere would hear the sound and would be awakened from their slumber. That night it was a true marvel that people slept, oblivious. The miracle was attributed to both the heavenly beings’ intentions and the cultivated perfections of character (*pāramī*) of *Prince Siddhattha* that dictated he would ordain in this night. *Prince Siddhattha* tugged on *Kanthaka*’s reigns and directed him to the gate on the east side.

The prince sat atop *Kanthaka*, who trotted slowly while *Channa* walked beside him. *Channa* did not know what the prince’s pressing business was or how he would get out. The colossal gates were shielded by at least three additional layers of gigantic gates.

Each gate could only be opened or closed by eight men, and up to two hundred of *King Suddhodana's* soldiers stood guard. *Prince Siddhattha's* perfections of character along with the assistance of heavenly beings compelled the night guards to sleep soundly and unaware. The large gate miraculously swung open on its own. Once *Prince Siddhattha*, riding atop of *Kanthaka*, and *Channa* passed the gates miraculously shut again. It was as if nothing had transpired. The night guards awakened completely oblivious.

The next morning, the courtesans and servants noticed that something was out of place. The sun was already halfway on its course and *Prince Siddhattha* still had not stepped out. So they went to visit *Princess Yasodharā* to inform her that in this morning, *Prince Siddhattha* had not been seen leaving his bedroom. *Princess Yasodharā* wondered if something had happened to him. She then walked to his bedroom, opened the door, peeked in, and saw an empty bed. She didn't know which palace he had slept in. The personal servants and courtesans searched for him in the three palaces and combed through all of the areas within them. He was nowhere to be found. The night guards, when questioned, did not have a clue either. As the stables that *Channa* tended were searched, *Channa* and the horse *Kanthaka* were found to be missing. Everyone concluded that *Prince Siddhattha* had left the palace. Tears streamed down *Princess Yasodharā's* face. The courtesans bawled, hugging each other in turmoil. *Princess Yasodharā* held *Rāhula* close to her chest and wept, life practically rushing out of her as she said,

"Oh dear husband, what have I done wrong that you have left me and our young Rāhula to suffer like this? Or were you upset over

something? Why didn't you let me know? Were you angry or unhappy with me? If I had known, I would have changed to fit your every wish. Oh, why must you hurt me like this? Who will I lean on from now on? Oh, please don't leave me. Don't you feel for our newborn son? Please grant me this."

Prince Siddhattha arrived at the Anomā river and was ordained as an ascetic in that very location. Details of this are available in textbooks. Once ordained, referring to him *Siddhattha Bhikkhu* is suitable. From that point, *Siddhattha Bhikkhu* heard that there were two ascetics who practiced well and were esteemed in the community. So, he studied and practiced following their lead. The two ascetics taught meditation for the sole sake of achieving tranquility. *Siddhattha Bhikkhu* thus meditated to the point of tranquility, exactly as the two ascetics instructed. The five higher psychic powers, the eight meditative attainments, absorptions of the fine material sphere, and four absorptions of the formless sphere were all dexterously achieved and became habitual for him. *Siddhattha Bhikkhu* achieved tranquility every single time. While meditating, it was as if the conscious was free of defilements and desire. When his conscious slipped out of tranquility and into sorrow, he always reverted to thoughts of *Princess Yasodharā* and *Rāhula*. ***Siddhattha Bhikkhu* practiced continuous tranquil meditation for a year. There was no indication whatsoever of the emergence of insight or wisdom.**

In past lives *Siddhattha Bhikkhu* had accumulated perfect *pāramī*, yet once he reached this meditative tranquility, no insight or wisdom emerged. Presently it is widely taught that meditative tranquility will cause wisdom to spontaneously arise. What kind

of meditative tranquility is this? When the Buddha was still alive, he never taught this to his followers. Or if the Buddha actually taught this, could you produce an example of whom he taught? Could you describe to me one person that effectively used this method? This is what is called instruction without regard to the manual. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* practiced meditative tranquility enough to merely see it as an example, as I have already explained. And he rejected this method as one that eliminated defilements and desire. This method was neither for purity, nor on the path to enlightenment, nor for the purpose of enlightenment. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* left the two ascetics to search for a new and different method.

Afterwards, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* encountered the Five Bhikkhus (*Pañcavaggīya*) who were searching for him. During that period, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* practiced austerities and self-mortification at *Donkasiri* Mountain. He had refrained from drinking water and eating for forty-nine days, such that he was emaciated and barely alive. At that point, he saw an omen of the king of heavenly beings (*devas*) strumming a three-stringed sitar. One string was too loose, producing an unharmonious sound. The second string was too taut, also producing an unpleasant sound. The third string was neither loose nor taut, and the sitar was harmonious. Once *Siddhattha Bhikkhu* saw this, he paralleled his practice to the sitar strings. Thus, he realized that his diligence was too taut, and if he continued down this path he would not survive.

From then on, he ceased those actions and returned to regular consumption. The Five Bhikkhus were unhappy with this and left him. *Siddhattha Bhikkhu* was by himself, and on his own. He had

the opportunity to see different methods in various practices, but he knew that none were the correct path. *Siddhattha Bhikkhu* still did not know what the correct path was. He continued on his way and because he was fatigued, he rested beneath a sacred fig (*Bodhi*) tree by the bank of the *Neranjara River*. He accepted a milk rice offering from Sujata, and floated the golden tray on the river. He wagered,

“If I am to be enlightened as a Buddha in this life, may this golden tray float up the river. If I am not to be enlightened as a Buddha in this life, may this golden tray float down the river with the current.”

Finding the Path to Enlightenment on His Own

Once *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* released the golden tray, it immediately travelled against the current. Thus he was injected with a great surge of confidence. He was sure to become a Buddha in this lifetime. This was to be the starting point for a new method of practice. In the past five years, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* had never used insight to contemplate any truths. This was the new beginning of *Bhikkhu Siddhattha's* usage of wisdom. The usage of wisdom in this case was the use of the parallel of the golden tray for consideration. So, understand that the inaugural point of practice is precisely wisdom. This is of monumental importance. Continue reading carefully and diligently. There exist obvious reasons confirming this as correct. This mode of practice is completely unlike that which the two ascetics taught. **This inaugural point initiated when *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* discovered *sammā-diṭṭhi*, correct and rational perception. *Sammā-saṅkappa*, right thought from insight-wisdom and causality,** was consequently righteous and rational.

As *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* used the parallel of the floating golden tray for consideration, his mind was able to clearly recognize and understand the foundations of the Three Common Characteristics: impermanence, suffering, and cessation of existence in the conventional form. Wagering has perpetually walked hand and hand with the human world. One example is lifting a Buddha statue or wagering in some other form. There must always be two resolutions. If something is to happen, then the person will be able to lift up the statue. If it is not to happen, then the person will not be able to lift it up. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha*

also wagered in this same way. If he were to become the Buddha, the golden tray would float against the current. If he were not meant to be the Buddha, the golden tray would be carried along in the current.

In this situation, the golden tray travelled against the tide, providing *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* with confidence in his ability. **The golden tray was employed as a parallel to utilize wisdom in deliberation. The golden tray traversing against the current was interpreted as *Bhikkhu Siddhattha's* own mind. He resolved to use attentive wisdom to train his mind, forbidding it from being pleased and satisfied with the desires surging along with the world's currents. Typically the mind desires easy and effortless delights falling under the five sensual pleasures (*kāma-guṇa*).** The mind is pleased by tangible appearances, sounds, scents, tastes, and delicate sensations. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* had desired these things. But from this point on, he would use wisdom to resist these pleasures. If the mind were not pleased with these types of things, then incorrect perception and misunderstanding of worldly pleasures would not exist.

This is how *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* used discernment to not allow the mind from being pleased or displeased and to reject possessions, status, accolades, and contentment that were chained to worldly sensual pleasures. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* used wisdom to coach his mind to be unattached to these things. He trained himself that these were all things that tied the mind down and created infatuation with and strong attachment to the world.

Discernment Used to Teach Oneself to Acquire Expansive Knowledge

Bhikkhu Siddhattha used discernment for analysis and also taught and trained his mind to have perpetual, expansive knowledge. This was for the purpose of understanding that all kinds of thoughts arise, stay, and pass. Using discernment for analysis requires both zooming in and out according to the situation. For instance, seeing an external occurrence, like seeing people who are old, ailing, and dead. Internalize the parallel: we too will follow that course. Or externalize the parallel such that both internal and external are one and the same: we also age, get sick, and die. Whatever occurs to others will similarly occur to us. Others experience suffering, and we too, experience suffering. Other people are impermanent, and so we are impermanent as well. Other people's bodies are ceased from self-being, and our bodies are ceased from self-being as well. When experiencing and seeing human corpses in a particular condition, internalize that condition such that we similarly see our own bodies as corpses.

Analyze the past and future in terms of the present. Scrutiny of issues in the past relies on memory, while examination of issues in the future relies on supposed or conventional form. Memory and conventional form are crucial supports for insight-wisdom. Memory is selective in this sense. Elect to remember things that involve destructive consequences and perils so that the mind is scared to encounter them. Negative consequences and dangers exist in this world, and everyone born into this world must experience and encounter them, whether to a small or large degree.

Thus, choose to remember things which involve harmful consequences and perils so that the mind does not relapse into pleasurable things. If something conduces the craving of fine sense pleasures (*rāga-taṇhā*), lust, or passion and is in the form of tangible appearances, sound, scent, tastes, or delicate sensations – and wisdom is absent – then there will be infatuation and attachment to these things. Those who possess righteous wisdom seek only to remember things with negative consequences and dangers in tow, and then use those to develop understanding. One illustration of this is our own physical form and that of someone else's. Use insight to consider how both these corporal forms induce harmful consequences and perils. The negative consequences from our own bodies translate to the negative consequences others experience with their bodies as well. All bodies are subject to illness or death, which is harmful to life. In past lives, bodies have experienced harmful consequences and perils just like in present lives.

Contemplating the Physical Aggregates

Only those with wisdom will know and understand, according to the truth, that physical form is not as attractive and pleasant as is perceived. The nature of physical form is not at all attractive, but rather, is filthy. Despite showering to remove dirt, the filthiness of corporal form does not wash away. If one abstains from showering for ten days, the odor of the filth will permeate to the outside. It will be the disgust and revulsion of society.

For example, hair on the head, hair on the body, nails, teeth, and skin are all unattractive and the tangible forms themselves have not declared that they are pleasant in any way. The attractiveness is attributed to defilements, imagination, delusion, and absence of knowledge. Physical form is pleasant because of misunderstandings. It is attractive because of love, pleasure, lust, and passion. If the mind does not possess love, pleasure, lust, and passion, then physical form will be devoid of any measure of beauty.

This is because beauty is not dependent on physical form in any way. Accessories and adornments are merely a façade, and cosmetics are only intended for pretense. Similarly, corpses are made up with color and design, while within, they are rotting, filthy, and constantly radiating a stench. Likewise, our human physical form, as well as that of others, is adorned with accessories and fragrances to mask the rotting stench of our bodies. This allows humans to live alongside one another.

The use of insight-wisdom for discernment is employed to know the truth, creation, existence, and cessation of the physical form aggregate. This is because the creation of the physical form aggregate does not transpire within a single day. It will gradually develop. Once development is complete, suffering of the mind and body serves as its shadow. Impermanence applies from the state of a red blood cell, to an infant, to a teenager, to an adult, to an aging and sick person, and eventually to a deceased person. Upon death, the physical form aggregate will cease to exist in the conventionally defined form of an 'animal,' 'person,' 'self,' or an 'other.' The conventional perception that physical form belongs to the self will cease. The composition of the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire) that are recognized as the human body will disintegrate back into each of its original elements. This goes along with the basis of not-self, which is complete cessation. Unlike that which we perceive, nothing at all belongs to the self.

When the mind lacks wisdom, infatuation and clinging will occur. Once a desire is unfulfilled and different from what was imagined, suffering exists. Desire is only generated towards the course of contentment and pleasure. Birth is desired within a family of riches, status, accolades, and happiness. If all human desires were fulfilled, the state of the human world would not exist as it does. If everyone shared the same condition, no one would be able to criticize others because of the identical possession of riches, status, accolades, and happiness. Or if the world were completely comprised of orphans and the poor, while lacking riches and status, and only contained harsh words, gossip, and constant suffering of the mind and body, no one would want to be born in this human world. Everyone desires happiness.

No one desires the decline of wealth or status, or gossip, suffering, and unhappiness. Yet, there is no escape because the truth completely envelopes this world. It is impossible to meet only with happiness. There is a need for things that are satisfying and desired to permanently exist. Once these needs are unfulfilled, suffering arises. This is how humans constantly strive to resist the truth of nature. Yet there does not exist a single person in this world who is completely satisfied and content. You name it – no one ever fulfills their desires. Once born, everyone must face aging, illness, and death.

The Cause of Birth within the Three Realms

In another angle, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* thought, what if the golden tray floated along with the current? Where would the golden tray end up? *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* internalized the parallel of the golden tray, comparing it to his own mind. If the golden tray were carried along with the current, it would continue to float. Whatever direction the current took, the tray would follow. Eventually it would drift out into the vast ocean, floating around without end. Likewise, if the mind was impregnated with defilements and desire, then the mind would continue to be born and die within the great world of conventional form (*sammuti*) without end. At low tide, the golden tray would temporarily land on sand or an island. At high tide, it would drift along the current without end. In the same vein, love and desires have no end, and the desires of the mind have no boundaries or limits. Thus the phrase,

“Natthi taṇhāsamā nadi”

An ocean as vast as desire does not exist.

Any amount of water can never fill up the ocean. Likewise, the mind can never be satisfied in its desire.

Bhikkhu Siddhattha thought about when the tray fell onto the sand or various islands during low tide. He employed insight and compared it to his mind. The mind fell into a human existence, sometimes born as a king, others as a *Brahman*, Vessa, Suddha, or Candala (untouchable caste). Sometimes it was a birth in a small or large sphere like the sense, form, formless, or animal spheres. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* used insight to contemplate this,

and thus emerged the wisdom to clearly know and realize the cause of human birth (*ñāṇa-dassana*). While he was still a prince, he had seen the elderly, the sick, and the deceased. The cause of these conditions was birth. At that time, he could not determine the cause of birth. He had just discerned the cause of human birth from the parallel of the golden tray. **It is desire (*taṇhā*) that propels rebirth and cycling through the three spheres. These are *kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā*, and *vibhava-taṇhā*.**

1. *Kāma-taṇhā* means material desires (*vatthu-kāma*) and sensuality or lust (*kilesa-kamā*). *Vatthu-kāma* denotes material possessions we are attached to and pleased with. Consider that these possessions belong to the world and are merely relied on, day to day. If these possessions are considered personal belongings, it is only in a legal sense or for the duration of life on earth. But once the mind or conscious (*citta*) departs from the physical body, the personal belongings lose all meaning and association to the self. Those who are alive assert claims on those belongings accordingly.

Likewise, after a couple months or years pass, those people will similarly depart from the possessions. No one can take worldly belongings with them. The phrase, “belongs to me,” will become void. Nothing absolutely belongs to the self. If there is attachment and contentment, there will be suffering. Once the mind realizes and understands that physical form and worldly, material belongings are merely daily necessities, then the clinging will loosen and the attachment will be of a lesser degree. Greed and misunderstanding will gradually dissolve. This is an illustration of how to eliminate attachment. There must be mindfulness and

wisdom to teach the mind to realize the truth. The mind will thus gradually loosen its attachment to desire, to the point of elimination.

***Kilesa-kamā* means sensual pleasures (*kāma-guṇa*) the mind is attached to and pleased with.** Namely, tangible appearances, sounds, scents, tastes, and delicate sensations. The mind possesses love, lust, and passion as emotions. It has a need for these sensual pleasures. And once the mind is fixated on an object of sensual enjoyment (*kamā*), it will urgently direct all efforts towards the quest for *kamā*. The mind's perceived needs, masked by *kilesa-kamā*, pervasively exist in the world. But, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* employed mindfulness and wisdom to analyze and eradicate misunderstandings and misperceptions, so that the mind clearly realized and understood the destructive consequences and perils that arose from sensual pleasures.

2. *Bhava-taṇhā* (craving for sensual pleasures connected with the view of eternalism) refers to the mind's contentment with the realm into which it is born and its aversion to any change. It continues to desire existence in whatever realm it has existed in. If this is a human realm, it will continue to prefer existence in the human realm forever. Despite others' claims of a happier existence in the divine or celestial realms of existence, the mind is not at all interested. It desires an existence identical to its current state. Or if there is reason compelling a departure from its current realm, the mind will be attached to something such as children, grandchildren, or worldly possessions that it is content with.

3. *Vibhava-taṇhā* (craving for sensual pleasures connected with the view of nihilism) denotes the mind's unwillingness to be reborn into a realm it is dissatisfied with. For example, those who exist in the formless world do not desire rebirth in the human realm. Those humans born into wealth, a highly regarded status and a pleasing abundance of sensual pleasures (*kāma-guṇa*) do not desire birth in an impoverished family. They also do not yearn for a birth as a cripple, to lack an ear or an eye, or to be somehow physically incomplete. Nor is there an aspiration for birth in the four planes of loss and woe (*apāyabhūmi*). These four realms of misery include the hell realm (*niraya*), hungry ghost realm (*pittivisaya*), animal realm (*tiracchanayoni*), and demon realm (*asurakāya*). Even though a birth in these realms is not desired, it is warranted as a result of bad *kamma*. There is no right to demand a rebirth to satisfy a desire. *Kamma* that has been committed dictates the bearing of the next realm of rebirth.

These three types of desire (*taṇhā*) are the cause and catalysts for the cycling of rebirth in the Three Realms (*kāmaloka*: the world of sense desire, *rūpaloka*: form-sense sphere, and *arūpaloka*: formless, immaterial sphere). Once the cause is exterminated, the issue of rebirth in the Three Realms is eradicated. The perception that desire generates happiness is a personal misunderstanding.

Unavoidable Suffering

Unavoidable suffering is the condition of anguish particular to the aggregates (*khandha*). Even if a person is wealthy and pleased by an abundance of sensual pleasures (*kāma-guṇa*), the condition of suffering will always manifest in the aggregates. For example, the form aggregate in which the mind resides manifests suffering in the body and mind. Although no one desires this affliction, it is unavoidable because of its natural course. Despite exhaustive efforts to eliminate suffering, it cannot be accomplished.

For instance, the quest for sensual pleasures (tangible appearances, sounds, scents, tastes, and delicate sensations) can obscure suffering, but no one can completely suppress it. This is because suffering is an absolute truth that corresponds to the form aggregate. It reveals itself at all times, day and night. Whether standing, walking, sitting, or sleeping, these are merely postures that temporarily circumvent suffering. None of these postures are permanently or positively painless. Standing, walking, sitting, or sleeping for prolonged periods causes suffering.

Where will we find happiness from the form aggregate? At last, tangible appearances, sounds, scents, tastes, and delicate sensations put a temporary veil over suffering. Instead of producing positive consequences, it incites increased and more pronounced suffering. Similarly, putting out a fire with sawdust and rice hulls precisely stimulates the flame instead of extinguishing it. Once the fire grows again, repeating the action of throwing in sawdust and rice hulls is not an intelligent method at all.

Likewise, using tangible appearances, sounds, scents, tastes, and delicate sensations to eliminate the mind's anguish, only serves to mask the suffering. It is only a means of temporary relief from suffering. Eventually the sense objects (*āyatana*) will transform into an efficient cause of suffering. This is because the experience of sense objects causes happiness and unhappiness, and feeds the flame of desire for delicate sense pleasures (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Thus, the Buddha stated, the inability to control the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind from travelling outward and becoming intertwined with physical form, sound, scent, taste, sensation, and emotions, is the precise cause of suffering for the mind. Therefore suffering arises and paves the way for other types of unintended suffering to congregate as the mind's misery. Please consider this using wisdom in order to clearly realize and see the truth as it is.

As for aging, sickness, and death that evoke suffering, these are things that are unavoidable. No matter how we are terrified of them, there is no escape because birth has already occurred. Aging, sickness, and death are consequences of birth. If birth can be ceased, then suffering within the Three Realms will never develop. Therefore, those practitioners who do not desire birth and suffering must analyze birth and suffering during this lifetime. This must be done so as to gradually extinguish the attachment to future lives. This will cut off the momentum of anxious concern, which serves as a catalyst for rebirth, through the use of razor sharp and daring concentration and discernment, to the point of the extinction of attachment to anything in the world (*anālayo*). The site for rebirth will be destroyed and the root cause which spawns rebirth will be extinguished. Thus the saying,

“Samūlaṃ taṇhaṃ abbuyha,”

Therefore, being one who uproots desire and destroys all its minor roots,

“Nicchāto parinibbutoti”

the mind absolutely ceases wanting and extinguishes defilements and suffering.

Once *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* considered the ultimate, undisputable truth (*sacca-dhamma*) using continuous insight, his mind realized and understood in alignment with the truth. Similar to shining a light in a dark place, once the bright light shines in any direction, the eye sees objects and knows what they are. Likewise, once the mind has the bright shining light of wisdom, the mind sees and accurately knows the ultimate truth for what it is. It sees suffering as suffering. It sees impermanent objects as impermanent. It sees the state of cessation of existence in supposed form as cessation of existence in supposed form. If the mind truly sees and understands according to these truths, the mind sees and understands the truth correctly.

The Emergence of the Buddha's Wisdom

Ñāṇa-dassana, or understanding and realization of the truth, emerged in *Bhikkhu Siddhattha's* mind. Righteous understanding and perception according to the truths of the world expanded without bounds. Any one thing has a cause for its occurring, exists for a period, and ceases when its cause ceases. Nothing can exist permanently. Regardless of whether or not that thing is possessed by a soul, everything falls under impermanence. But humans refuse to accept this impermanence and suffer as a consequence. We do not want things to depart and disappear from us. We want our possessions to stay with us forever, so we become attached and believe that those items actually belong to us. Once the state of those belongings transform, suffering arises.

Thus, the mind suffers because of what we possess. **If the mind believes that it possesses an object, it will suffer because of that object.** Desire is attached to and involved with impermanent objects. But, we want those objects to be permanent. Money, gold, or belongings that appear in this world are merely earthly belongings that have existed since the dawn of the world. They are only intended for daily use, for the purpose of day to day survival. The days, months, and years that follow will see a transformation in the state of those things. Those lacking wisdom are not able to understand this concept and consequently suffer because of worldly possessions. If the mind is still pleased with, attached to, worried about, and caring for worldly belongings and the five sense pleasures, then the mind will cling to, believe in, and be reborn in this world without end.

Bhikkhu Siddhattha used wisdom to consider the truth as such, and correct perception according to the truth, *sacca-dhamma*, arose in his mind. **Bhikkhu Siddhattha** then assured himself that **this method was correct**. The method was discovered through his own wisdom. No one was his teacher, nor did he find the path in a manual. This is because the truths in the world already exist as the manual for training, but it is due to a deficiency in wisdom that these truths are not discerned. Examples that are *sacca-dhamma*, the ultimate truth, are ubiquitous in this world. **Bhikkhu Siddhattha** thus stated, **“Take a needlepoint and stick it in any location in the world, the ultimate truth will exist in that location.”** Without wisdom, sitting or sleeping on top of the truth or treading back and forth on it will not elucidate that *sacca-dhamma* in any way. Thus the phrase,

“*Natthi paññā samā ābhā*”

There does not exist a light as bright as wisdom.

Wisdom in this sense means *dassana-ñāṇa*, which is different from *ñāṇa-dassana*. *Dassana-ñāṇa* means realization before understanding. *Ñāṇa-dassana* means understanding before realization.

Both of these types of insight (*ñāṇa*) must work together simultaneously for a resultant product to emerge. For example, once one understands, one must realize. If one understands but lacks realization, one will not have the courage to decide what is correct or incorrect. It is possible that misunderstanding will occur. If one realizes and does not understand, then one cannot define what was realized. One will similarly be unable to decide what is correct or incorrect.

Therefore, *ñāṇa-dassana* and *dassana-ñāṇa* must be defined in terms of cause and effect. For example, from understanding the ultimate truth through manuals, one will only be able to speak according to manuals. The actual truth will not be experienced or realized. Or if one realizes according to the undisputable truth without understanding that what it realized was the truth, then the realization is without benefit. The process of making a decision will be uncertain.

Likewise, those who fish and reach down into the water only to grab a snake's head, while believing it to be a fish, are delighted at the aspect of catching a fish. This is because only understanding is present. So a decision may possibly be incorrect because there is an understanding that it is a fish that was caught. Once the hand grasping the object is above water and one realizes that the object is in fact a snake, the understanding of the object as a fish will disappear. This is because the truth of its being a snake will be realized. The way to prevent a snake bite will thus be elementary. In regards to the truth, realizing before understanding or understanding before realizing lies in the same vein. The Buddha stated,

“Esa dhammo sanantano”

Sacca-dhamma, the ultimate truth, is ancient and has existed since ancient times.

The ultimate truth has existed alongside the world since its inception. Delusion and infatuation with the world is due to the lack of wisdom to discern the ultimate truth, which exists in the world. The Buddha was the one to discover the ultimate truth

before any other in this world. He used insight-wisdom to analyze these ultimate truths and consequently completely detached himself from misperceptions, misunderstandings, and delusions.

Many months transpired before arriving at this point. During that time, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* practiced continuous diligence. He floated the golden tray in October and used it as an internalized parallel, as was previously detailed. If practice initiates with *sammā-diṭṭhi*, or right view, then the use of parallels to contemplate other issues is simple.

If the question arises, as to whether or not *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* practiced meditation during that period, the answer will be that concentration existed in his mind, but it was focused concentration. As for tranquil meditation, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* had experienced that with the two ascetics. His practice during that time did not develop in any sense. At this time, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* employed focused concentration to boost his wisdom.

This focused concentration for the purpose of advancing wisdom does not require repetition of a meditative phrase. Because focused concentration already exists, merely use wisdom in concert. This alert and focused concentration is called *samādhi*, or concentration meditation. The use of thoughts to contemplate according to the truth is called *paññā*, or wisdom. *Sati* is the mindful realization of the wisdom used to analyze each issue. Therefore, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* work as a team. The absence of one will result in an imperfect practice.

During that time, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* possessed *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*, and his practice of *dhamma* moved forward by leaps

and bounds. Insight to realize and understand the path wholesomely emerged and thus *Bhikkhu Siddhattha's* examples of practice developed wholesomely. In reaching deliverance and enlightenment, perfect knowledge by insight emerged within *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* and he was thus one who completely and clearly knows the world. Thus,

“Natthi loke raho nāma”

Secrets do not exist in the Three Realms.

Within the desire realm (*kāmaloka*), form realm (*rūpaloka*), and formless realm (*arūpaloka*), there is no part in these Three Realms that can even begin to mask the Buddha's perfect knowledge by insight. Other insight also emerged within the Buddha, like supernormal, higher psychic powers, or *abhiññā*.

Abhiññā

Abhiññāñāṇa is insight that arises from direct mental sensation as a result of concentration (*samādhi*). According to the perfections of character (*pāramī*) each individual has cultivated, those who did not train in terms of super-knowledges or higher psychic powers (*abhiññā*) in previous lifetimes will not develop them in this lifetime regardless of the amount of tranquil meditation practiced. As for those who have trained in *abhiññā* in past lives, any amount of tranquil meditation will trigger the emergence of *abhiññā*.

Abhiññā can occur with lay people or those who have attained one of four levels of holiness on the path to ultimate emancipation (*ariya-puggala*), regardless of ethnicity, race, or religion. *Abhiññā* can also emerge in people who do not follow any religion. This is because tranquil meditation is universal and has existed alongside this world. According to history, before Buddhism arose in the world, there existed those who practiced tranquil meditation and experienced *abhiññā*. As an example, the ascetic *Asita* was well versed in tranquil meditation and *abhiññā*. He visited *Prince Siddhattha* a few days after his birth. Also in attendance were the ascetics *Ālāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta*, who taught *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* the methods of tranquil meditation. These ascetics were unversed in neither the five nor eight precepts.

There are many types of *abhiññā*. I will briefly explain.

1. *Cakkhu-ñāṇa* is the divine eye that arises directly from the mind. Whatever is desired to be seen can be viewed

by focusing the mind. For example, if desired, the community of heavenly beings and how their daily lives transpire can be viewed in its entirety. Similarly, the community and lives of those in a hell realm or hungry ghost realm can be seen.

2. *Dibba-sota* is the divine ear that makes it possible to hear the sounds from all levels of heavenly beings along with the tormenting sounds of those in a hell realm.
3. *Ceto-pariya-ñāṇa* is the ability to penetrate and know the thoughts of others, whether the thoughts are good or bad. This is telepathy, knowing the status of other's minds.
4. *Iddhividhi-ñāṇa* is magical powers to dive into or soar above the earth. Both lay people and *ariya-puggala* have been documented to have this power.
5. *Manomayiddhi-ñāṇa* is the power of the mind. If desired one person can be multiplied into many persons or a person can transform into animal form.
6. *Pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa* is the ability to recollect one's former lives, how that life transpired, and who were one's relatives.
7. *Cutūpapātañāṇa* is the knowledge of the deceased, the location of their souls, what *kamma* they are serving, and what will transpire once that *kamma* has been fulfilled.

8. *Atītaṃsaññā* is the knowledge of the past concerning every issue.

9. *Anāgataṃsaññā* is the knowledge of the future concerning every issue.

The *abhiññāññā* described here are of the worldly or mundane level. They occur only with those who trained in that way during past lives. These various types of insight (*ñāṇa*) do not in any way eliminate defilements or desire from the mind. For those who do not possess wisdom, these *ñāṇa* will create tremendous defilements and self-conceit. There will be infatuation and delusion of the self as both grand and good. This self-conceit will greatly inflate the ego.

During our times, people who possess these kinds of insight are highly regarded and praised by the masses as someone who practices to the fullest extent of righteousness and correctness. Or they may even be admired as one who has attained the final level of holiness on the path to ultimate enlightenment (*arahant*) who has emerged in the world. If *abhiññāññā* has already occurred to oneself, one must constantly use wisdom to remind oneself that *abhiññāññā* is only for amusement. Do not fall into the belief that one possesses any kind of virtue. It is only a worldly insight that may deteriorate. It is in no way permanent. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* possessed the aforementioned *abhiññāññā* before he became enlightened. Yet, he was still an ordinary person and he was unimpressed by these insights in any way.

Āsavakkhayañāṇa Occurs

At the time *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* floated the golden tray at the *Neranjara River*, it was the rainy season and the water level was high. Because of this, he had not yet crossed the river. The following year, once the water level of the *Neranjara River* fell, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* was able to cross the river. There, he practiced *dhamma* on the shore containing the Bodhi tree that shared his identical birth date.

On the night of a full moon in June, the day the Buddha was enlightened, he requested hay from a Brahmin. He laid it underneath the Bodhi tree so that he could sit down. It was during this time that *āsavakkhayañāṇa* occurred. Before enlightenment, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* had already experienced all the insights (*ñāṇa*). During the night of his enlightenment there would only be one insight, called ***āsavakkhayañāṇa*, the knowledge that the worldly defilements would cease only within a carimakacitta, or lightning quick snap of the fingers.**

Āsavakkhayañāṇa is commonly defined in texts as the insight (*ñāṇa*) that causes all mental intoxications (*āsava*) to cease. This causal definition does not have a strong enough foundation to be believable. Once *āsavakkhayañāṇa* arises nothing needs to be done because it is a complete and whole process within itself. *Āsavakkhayañāṇa* will not endure for long before enlightenment as a Buddha occurs. This is because *āsavakkhayañāṇa* is an insight that is both brave and powerful. It is an insight signaling that worldly defilements will cease. Take notice that when *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* sat on the stack of hay he had the aspiration, “I will

sit in this place until I become a Buddha. If I do not become enlightened I will forever sit in this place, even if my skin, bones, and muscles deteriorate.”

This signifies that *āsavakkhayañāṇa* had already arisen in *Bhikkhu Siddhattha*, and that is why he was brave enough to articulate this aspiration. Beforehand, he had sat in many places without ever uttering these words. This time, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* already knew that all mental intoxications would be extinguished. What is more, this kind of aspiration is only an emphasis for those who will champion mental intoxications anyway. It is not that the aspiration itself will aid in extinguishing all mental intoxications, because they would cease and he would become a Buddha, even without the aspiration.

In texts, the Buddha’s enlightenment is commonly described as occurring during the full moon in the month of June. His enlightenment started with:

Paṭhamayāma (the first watch - 6:00 to 10:00 pm)

Reminiscence of past or previous births
(*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*)

Majjhimayāma (the middle watch - 10:00 pm to 2:00 am)

The knowledge of the deceased and the rebirth of beings
(*Cutūpapātañāṇa*)

Pacchimayāma (the last watch - 2:00 to 6:00 am)

The knowledge that all mental intoxications will be destroyed (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*)

In terms of *dhmma* practice, I will provide my personal opinion about reminiscence of past or previous lives (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*) and the knowledge of the deceased and the rebirth of beings (*Cutūpapātañāṇa*). Both of these insights are worldly and should not be grouped with the insight that is transcendental and beyond these worlds involved in the night the Buddha was enlightened. This is because *āsavakkhayañāṇa* is the insight of the definite extinguishment of mental intoxications. Thus, it is does not make sense for *āsavakkhayañāṇa* to be grouped with the other two.

According to the texts, during the three watches *paṭhamayāma*, *majjhimayāma*, and *pacchimayāma*, *pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*, *Cutūpapātañāṇa* and *āsavakkhayañāṇa* occurred, respectively. In terms of practice, the two worldly insights (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa* and *Cutūpapātañāṇa*) were in no way involved in the night of the Buddha's enlightenment. Because texts say otherwise, the common interpretation has followed. Consider how *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* laid the hay down underneath the Bodhi tree, sat, and articulated his aspiration. All of this indicates that *āsavakkhayañāṇa* had already occurred.

It is not suitable to combine the other two worldly insights (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa* and *Cutūpapātañāṇa*) with the transcendental insight of the cessation of mental intoxications (*āsavakkhayañāṇa*). This is only a personal opinion. In order to determine whether or not it is correct, one should use reason as opposed to believing everything in the texts. Otherwise, one will be one who believes in things without using thought or reason.

Āsavakkhayañāṇa only occurs to the *arahant*: 1. The Buddha, 2. *Paccekabuddha* (A silent Buddha, one who does not teach), 3. *arahant* disciples of the Buddha. The term ‘enlightenment’ is used only with the Buddha and *Paccekabuddha*. The terms ‘attain’ and ‘achieve’ are used with disciples: *sotāpanna* (one who has achieved the first stage of enlightenment or stream entry), *sakadāgāmī* (one who has attained the second stage on the path to enlightenment and will be reborn only once before final enlightenment), and *anāgāmī* (one who achieved the third stage of enlightenment, a non-returner).

Those who are evolved in insight development (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) may also achieve holiness and become one who has attained a stage on the path to ultimate enlightenment (*ariya-puggala*). Those well evolved in insight development, which is wisdom of a higher level, will be able to achieve final enlightenment. This is because *vipassanā-ñāṇa* is a brave and powerful insight that can be linked with *āsavakkhayañāṇa*.

Achievement of each level of *ariya-puggala* (*sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmī*, *anāgāmī*, *arahant*) is a personal, individual knowledge that cannot be compared to or measured against any texts or any person. Even if the Buddha is present, it is not necessary to ask what level one has achieved. This individual knowledge is already known. This was the way of those who had achieved ultimate enlightenment in the era of the Buddha.

In present times, however, practitioners await approval from teachers to certify the level that they have attained. Alternatively, the symptoms and characteristics that one possesses are held up against those described in texts. When there is a perceived match,

one draws the conclusion and self-certifies the attainment of each level. In most cases, there is a misperception of the self. If the master's self-certification is discussed with followers (who already have incredible faith in their master) they will, in turn, agree and recertify the master. In most cases during current times, those who are believed to be *ariya-puggala* have been certified by their followers. Thus, from this, a business transaction with mutual benefit has arisen.

Discernment of Noble Persons is Difficult

In regards to the question of whether or not those who have attained a level of holiness on the path to *nibbāna* (*ariya-puggala*) of various levels and those who have attained ultimate emancipation (*arahant*) exist in current times, the response is that these individuals do exist. Although few in number, they still exist. Thus the saying,

“Arahanta asuññaloko”

If those who practice according to right views (*sammā-ditṭhi*) still exist, the world will not experience a shortage of the arahant.

However, those people will not expose themselves to anyone. They will pursue lives as other common ascetics. What this means is that the deportment of past births will be the outward behaviors in the present life. Thus the discernment of *ariya-puggala* or *arahant* is extremely difficult, if not impossible. And listening to their preaching will not clarify this issue because there are manuals describing the expected behaviors of the *arahant*. Observation of actions or manners, both verbal and non-verbal is still inconclusive. Thus, the discernment of noble persons is difficult and these analogies exist:

1. Deep water-deep shadow
2. Deep water-shallow shadow
3. Shallow water-deep shadow
4. Shallow water-shallow shadow

“Deep water” indicates those *ariya-puggala* who have achieved a level of emancipation. “Deep shadow” describes the outward actions of one with good manners. “Shallow water” means those who have not yet achieved a level of holiness. “Shallow shadow” describes the outward actions of one with bad manners.

If the first and the third pair are taken together, it will be impossible to discern which person is an *ariya-puggala*. This is because both share good manners and calm deportment. If the second and fourth pair are compared, it will be similarly difficult to discriminate which individual is *ariya-puggala*. Therefore, discernment of a noble person is difficult.

Many argue that all *ariya-puggala* remains will become relics upon death. This is actually incorrect. Only *arahant* remains will become relics. As an example, the Buddha, *Paccekabuddha* and *arahant* remains become relics, but no one else’s. Please understand this. Those who seek out merit commonly desire paying respects and giving alms to the *arahant*. These actions are considered to warrant a high level of merit.

In terms of sermons, these people also desire to listen to only those which are given by an *arahant*. This corresponds to the historical account of *King Pasenadi’s* dream. In one aspect of his dream, **water pots of small and large sizes were all sitting in the same area. However, rain only fell into the large water pots, and not at all into the small pots.**

The Buddha prophesized that in the distant future, to cultivate merit, the faithful would seek out the *arahant*, famous ascetics, or elderly ascetics. Possessions and the four types of necessary

sustenance (food, clothing, shelter, medicine) of the faithful followers will be offered in tremendous and beyond sufficient quantities. Other ascetics will receive little attention and offerings.

This method of giving alms does not contribute to the whole of Buddhism because it does not sustain the majority of monks. More junior ascetics are given little attention and importance. This kind of behavior is clearly illustrated in our current times. This is the tail end of the Buddhist era. Even the ascetics themselves do not behave properly, and the faithful have consequently lost respect for the monk order. **This is how people lose faith in Buddhism and the mind discredits *dhamma*.**

The Buddha's Meditation

As for the question of whether or not the Buddha practiced tranquil meditation before his enlightenment, the answer is that the Buddha possessed omniscient insight (*sabbaññutañña*). He was able to know and practice in every method. He was whole and perfect in behaviors of *paññāvimutti* (emancipation through insight) and *cetovimutti* (deliverance of the mind). He would use the two types of meditation during relevant times. There are two types of meditation:

1. Alert and focused meditation
2. Tranquil meditation

The Buddha was skilled in these two modes of meditation. He possessed omniscience, in every aspect of realization, understanding, and practice. During the period of meditation with the two ascetics, tranquil meditation was the goal. Once he departed from the two ascetics, he rested on the shore of the *Neranjara River*. He received a milk-rice offering from *Sujāda* and floated the golden tray. Then, he started a new mode of practice. This was the focused meditation that was previously described.

When the Buddha desired to rest his mind in serenity, he would alternate between formless meditation (*arūpa-jhāna*) and form meditation (*rūpa-jhāna*). During times that he desired the use of wisdom, he would exercise focused meditation. Whatever the Buddha desired to analyze, he would focus on that issue and use discernment until he was satisfied with the thorough investigation.

As for focused and tranquil meditation, each method of meditation is clarified during the dispensation of the Buddha. Because the character of each disciple was different, the Buddha separated the two types of meditation such that they would correspond to each disciple's preference. If meditation corresponds to one's character, one's practice will quickly evolve. You will understand more as you read on.

***Sammā-diṭṭhi* is the Foundation of Practice**

The communication and dispensation of the Buddhist religion would not be complete without a witness. The Buddha thought of the two ascetics and had insight that the two had passed away seven days before the Buddha's own enlightenment. The Buddha then stated that he was filled with regret. If only the two had the opportunity to listen to his preaching, then they would have attained emancipation in this lifetime.

In the past, the two ascetics had cultivated enough perfections of character (*pāramī*) to achieve ultimate enlightenment, but they practiced an incorrect method. They were stuck in the rut of tranquil meditation, infatuated with formless and form-meditation or absorptions. Once they passed away, they were reborn in the formless sphere, where they would carry out an eternally long life. When the *Buddha Metteyya* arises in the world, these two will not have departed from the *brahma* existence. Despite the sufficient *pāramī* to attain enlightenment in that lifetime, the incorrect mode of practice closed off the possibility of emancipation.

The same goes for the times in which we live. If an individual had cultivated enough perfections of character to attain a level of enlightenment, but practiced a method that strayed from that which the Buddha delineated, then that person would also be closed off from the possibility of emancipation. This is because the way of practice that will bring one into the path to enlightenment is limited. There is only one way, and it is called *sammā-diṭṭhi*, correct perception aligned with the truth.

If the foundation of *sammā-diṭṭhi* cannot be laid down in this lifetime, the chances of finding the path to ultimate enlightenment are nil. This is because in this day and age there are people who teach different methods. These masters are confident their methods of practice are correct. In this era, no one will be able to help anyone else. It will be likened to ‘every man for himself.’ Even if the path to enlightenment is not found in this lifetime, the current way of practice still cultivates perfections of character for future births.

The Buddha had delivered a discourse the Wheel of *Dhamma* to the Five Bhikkhus at the deer forest (*Isipatana*) in Benares. The Buddha’s deliverance of his very first discourse is of paramount importance. It can be said that this is where the roots of Buddhism were planted. There was the Triple Gem, which is the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and *Saṅgha* which we know of today. The Buddha used *sammā-diṭṭhi* (correct perception of the truth) and *sammā-saṅkappa* (using wisdom to contemplate according to the truth) to illustrate the first step of practice. These two are grouped under the heading of *paññā*, or wisdom. *Sammā-diṭṭhi* itself is of the utmost importance in *dhamma*. Thus,

“Hatthipadaṃ tesaṃ aggamakkhāyati,

sammādiṭṭhi tesaṃ dhammānaṃ aggamakkhāyati.”

The footprints of all legged animals are encompassed by a footprint of an elephant. Likewise, all dhamma is encompassed by *sammā-diṭṭhi*.

Sammā-diṭṭhi, right perception or view, is the starting point for practice. Correct perception of the truth is the commander leading the way to all other *dhamma*.

Sammā-saṅkappa is right thought, or the use of wisdom to contemplate according to the truth.

Sammā-vācā is right speech, or speech that is true and fair.

Sammā-kammanta is right action, or action according to what is just.

Sammā-ājīva is right livelihood, or conducting a life and business that is moral and legal.

Sammā-vāyāma is right effort. This means fair and just diligence in actions, speech, and thought.

Sammā-sati is right mindfulness.

Sammā-samādhi is right concentration.

The seven paths (*magga*) to *nibbāna* are encompassed in *sammā-diṭṭhi*, correct perception of the truth. Likened to a hen with seven chicks, whichever direction the hen takes, the chicks follow. Thus, all seven paths follow *sammā-diṭṭhi*. *Sammā-diṭṭhi* is the main artery for all *dhamma*. Those practitioners who have right view are essentially on their way to the Noble Path. Continuous practice on the Noble Path will lend to an opportunity to enter a level of holiness (*sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi*, *arahant*) in this lifetime. Many people assert that if one does not practice according to the four foundations of mindfulness, or *satipaṭṭhāna*,

then emancipation is not possible. This kind of definite statement is due to the four *satipaṭṭhāna* being founded on *sammā-diṭṭhi*.

Many people assert that practice must transpire in the Four Noble Truths. These are suffering, (*dukkha*), the cause or origin of suffering (*samudaya*), cessation or extinction of suffering (*nirodha*), and the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*magga*). Similarly, before knowing and understanding suffering, before knowing and understanding the cause of suffering, before reaching the cessation of suffering, everything starts at the Noble Eightfold Path. And the Noble Eightfold Path begins with *sammā-diṭṭhi*, correct perception of the truth.

Even though there are multitudes of categories and classifications, everything takes off from right view, *sammā-diṭṭhi*. Therefore, understand this because *sammā-diṭṭhi* is an important starting point that governs all other existing *dhamma*. Why did the Buddha classify *dhamma* in various categories? It is because the character and perfections of character, *pāramī*, of individuals differ, so the models and examples used for each person or group of people differs accordingly.

Many people and many groups assert that if practice does not follow *abhidhamma* (higher doctrine taught by the Buddha to *devas*), then there is definitely no way that one will become an *ariya-puggala*. The people who assert this are undereducated and unknowledgeable. They have read one book and asserted this claim.

Research the History of *Ariya-puggala*

The Buddha delivered a discourse to *Yasa Kulaputta* and his fifty-five disciples. They all achieved ultimate enlightenment. He also preached to the parents of *Yasa Kulaputta*, who were the first to attain the first stage of enlightenment, *sotāpanna*, in the *Buddha Gotama* era. After the close of the rains retreat, the Buddha had them disperse and communicate the teachings to others. The Buddha went to deliver a discourse to the thirty *bhaddavaggīyas* who all achieved enlightenment. He also preached to the three matted hair ascetics, usually worshipping fire, and their one thousand followers, and all attained enlightenment. He delivered a discourse to King Pimpisan and his court of one hundred twenty thousand. One hundred ten thousand of these people attained *sotāpanna*, while the remaining ten thousand who lacked perfections of character remained to cultivate more as well as to carry on the Triple Gem.

In the first rains retreat many people listened to the Buddha's discourses and attained *arahantship*. At the end of the rains retreat, these enlightened individuals were sent to proclaim the teachings. Each *arahant* was knowledgeable in right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and had examples and parallels to explain this to those who possessed wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). These misperceptions were thus corrected so that these individuals possessed right perceptions. As an example, Elder *Assaji* preached to *Upatissa* (*Venerable Sāriputta*) by saying,

***“Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā,
tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha,
tesañ-ca yo nirodho,
evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇo”***

Of those things that arise from a cause, the *Tathāgata* has told the cause,

and also what their cessation is: This is the doctrine of the Great Recluse.

With these words, *Upatissa*, who had great wisdom and right view, achieved the first stage on the path to enlightenment. From there *Upatissa* shared this short stanza with his friend, *Kolita* (*Venerable Mahā Moggallāna*), who then was also established as a *sotāpanna*. During the era of the *Buddha Gotama*, he and his disciples used right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) as the foundation for teachings. Even under other headings or categories, every subject is related to right view. The main purpose of these discourses is for listeners to develop the right mindset by changing incorrect perception to correct perception. Other categories of teachings followed thereafter.

I have used these individuals as examples because they are credible testimonies. What did the Buddha teach in those times that so many people were able to become *ariya-puggala*? Review the reasons that I have partially touched on. To which groups of people did he teach the precepts and moral conduct (*sīla*)? To which groups did he teach tranquil meditation (*samādhi*), for the purpose of cultivating wisdom?

Research the history of those who were *ariya-puggala* in those times. I have done this research, and nowhere in the texts, in the eight volumes of the Anthology of Sayings of the Buddha, or the discourses, sermons, or dialogues of the Buddha does it say to meditate towards tranquility for the purpose of generating wisdom. So then why is this taught in present times? Study the histories of *ariya-puggala* and understand the foundations of the teachings the Buddha demarcated. This way, one will not have qualms or question the precepts and *dhamma*. There will not be obstacles or doubt in upholding the precepts and *dhamma*. The mind will not be uncertain with regards to the precepts and one's *dhamma* practice will move forward and progress.

If one practices while uncertain in the precepts and *dhamma*, one will not be confident in oneself. Therefore, one will not be brave enough to put every effort into *dhamma*. First, there will be uncertainty about the precepts. Then, it will be about *dhamma*, constantly wondering if the practice is right or wrong. There will not be forward progress because one cannot rely on oneself nor make decisions. One will not be able to rely on mindfulness, wisdom, or one's ability. The Buddha said,

“Attāhi attano nātho”

One is one's own refuge.

Being one's own refuge relates to concentration and wisdom, and relying on one's ability and reasoning. It does not mean seeking answers from others. If others understand the way to practice, then you will be considered fortunate. If not, you will be out of luck. You will receive subjective and haphazard instruction

lacking guarantees or any responsibility. Those who practice will encounter inconclusive advice and wander like a blind man trying to find his way out of a pool.

In the same vein, those who practice and do not understand the correct way will wander endlessly. If one does not understand which heading of *dhamma* corresponds to one's character, it will be difficult to enter the path to enlightenment. Even with sufficient perfections of character to become an *ariya-puggala* in this lifetime, if one practices a method that does not correspond to what is familiar, then those perfections of character will not be of any assistance.

Dhamma practice in this era has an emphasis on mindfulness or concentration and tranquil meditation. No one is interested in practicing mindfulness and wisdom. Perhaps it is because people do not understand and do not know how to practice in this way that this method is not taught. *Sati-sampajañña*, having a clear consciousness and awareness of emotions that arise can be done, but it is not the means. Rather, it is the end result. Simply knowing or identifying emotions as they arise cannot eliminate the problems that trigger these emotions. These emotions are the result of a cause. And that cause, is wanting. If only the cause is destroyed, then the emotions will disappear as well.

As an analogy, a poisonous snake we desire to kill resides in a hole. But we are focused on staring at the hole, and when the snake pokes its head out and sees us, it retracts immediately. It is impossible to catch the snake. This is likened to using *sati-sampajañña* to be aware of emotions. If defilements and desire are to be completely destroyed, there must be mindfulness and

wisdom that is clever and sharp.

This is like catching the snake. If we are completely hidden and the snake cannot see us, we can watch the snake every second that passes. Once the snake does not see us, it will slide out of the hole in its entirety. Then we will take a rock or a tree branch and cover the hole so that the snake cannot get back in there. From there, take a weapon like a sword and kill the snake. Thus, the snake will be unable to use its poisons against us ever again.

As such, the models, examples, and methods of those who possess mindfulness and wisdom that can be used to eliminate defilements and desire from the mind, are just the same. Practicing *dhamma* with individual mindfulness and wisdom, an encompassing astute knowledge and personal ability will make it easy to extinguish defilements and desire from the mind.

“Paññāya parisujjhati”

The mind can be pure because of wisdom.

All of those who practice should understand this.

Paññāvimutti and Cetovimutti

Paññāvimutti

In this era, practitioners do not know their individual character. If one has the *paññāvimutti* (deliverance through wisdom) character but practices the conventions of the *cetovimutti* (deliverance through insight) character, then results of practice will not emerge. Likewise, those who possess *cetovimutti* character but apply the methods of *paññāvimutti* also will not see any advancement. Therefore, practitioners must figure out what type of intrinsic character they possess and practice accordingly. This way, time will not be wasted on achieving results.

In the era of the *Buddha Gotama*, most people possessed *paññāvimutti* character. Seventy percent of those who practiced and achieved emancipation were *paññāvimutti*. Research the discourses to find the accounts of *ariya-puggala* who had attained holiness. This includes both ascetics and lay people and the different levels of emancipation: *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi*, and *arahant*. It can be immediately discerned that the majority attained holiness through the wisdom-based character. Upon listening to a discourse, some became an *ariya-puggala* immediately while others used wisdom to contemplate further and soon thereafter became an *ariya-puggala*.

One who practices must take notice of oneself during meditation to discern whether the mind desires tranquility or to focus and think. If the mind is inclined towards serenity, let it further reside in tranquility. Once the mind is released from this state, use wisdom to contemplate issues immediately. These people are

grouped as concentration-based. Those who are of wisdom-based character are those who like to think once the mind is focused. If you are one of those, stop meditating. Instead, use wisdom to consider ultimate truths. It is because our character is as such that we cannot force our minds to be serene and tranquil.

Many orders teach meditation and differ in their teachings. These are quite astray from that which was practiced in the Buddha's time. In that era, meditation was done to be free of wanting and desires. In this age, meditation is done for the purpose of wanting. For example, meditation is done to fulfill the desire to possess *jhāna* (absorptions, states of mental concentration), *abhiññā*, purity of the mind, and the elimination of defilements and desires. There is a desire for wisdom to emerge from meditation. An understanding exists that once wisdom arises, defilements and desire will be eliminated from the mind and one will automatically become an *ariya-puggala*.

This kind of understanding differs immensely from that which the Buddha taught. Why is it taught and practiced to desire visions and omens (*nimitta*)? Once people emerge from meditation, the master will ask, "Did you see anything? What did you see?" Those who experience *nimitta* see the sky, heavenly beings, hell realms, or hungry ghosts. Sometimes it is a clear, round object, other times it is something different. Those who have not experienced any *nimitta*, consequently desire to experience one. Consequently, people meditate to experience *nimitta*.

In some places, states of the mind are discussed and then qualified as different levels of *jhāna*. During the times of the Buddha, what disciple did he appoint to discuss and qualify these states of mind

in the fashion of people nowadays? There are many other differing methods of meditation. In the era of the Buddha, meditation was only to boost wisdom, not for the purpose of motivating this or that to arise, like it is in current times.

Meditation, without careful research, can easily result in mistakes. Normal meditation without desires will not be problematic. But when meditation is done for the serious fulfillment of desires for this and that, it will cause the problematic ten imperfections or defilements of insight (*vipassanūpakilesa*) to arise. Meditators who lack education will have no idea that their meditation has taken a wrong turn.

Instead, they will be seriously focused and determined, expecting considerable results. Thus wrong views arise. A false perception that is not corrected is a wrong view. Determination that is wrong turns into the ten imperfections of insight. I have explained this in detail in my book, “Paradigm Shift.” You can find it, read it, and you will fully and clearly understand this issue.

Cetovimutti

Those who have the concentration-based character have previously been born as sages, seers or ascetics. They have practiced meditation (*samādhi*), absorptions (*jhāna*), and supernormal, higher psychic powers (*abhiññā*) until these were ingrained in their character. However, these people never practiced mindfulness and wisdom in contemplating the ultimate truth in any way. There was only steadfast determination in *samādhi*, *jhāna*, and *abhiññā*.

Once these people were reborn in contemporary times, their practice was consequently the same as that of past births, as they were content with tranquil meditation, *jhāna*, and *abhiññā*. As *jhāna* and *abhiññā* arise, they will reach a dead end, practicing in endless circles of tranquil meditation, *jhāna*, and *abhiññā*. They will not know of the way out that leads to the emancipation from the world. They will be infatuated and attached to these methods until the day they die.

People with *cetovimutti* character cannot be taught how to use mindfulness and wisdom in contemplating the ultimate truth in one fell swoop. The Buddha knew exactly how to instruct these types of individuals. He had to teach them to enter tranquil meditation and *jhāna* until there was no way out. At the dead end, there would be circular progress and they would have to start with *jhāna* all over again. This is likened to the analogy of the blind man trying to find his way out of a pool.

At this point, the Buddha will force them to turn over a new leaf. He will critique and provide them with suggestions as to motivate the realization that the serenity from tranquil meditation and *jhāna* is only temporary. This is the method that *Bhikkhu Siddhattha*, himself, had walked through. And it is neither the way to become an *ariya-puggala* nor the path to *nibbāna*. Upon death, these people will be reborn in the *brahma* realm and live extensively long lives. At the end of a *brahma* life, these people will be reborn in the human world once again. They will be lost and astray, without any goal or target. These people will follow the world's norms in an endless cycle.

The Buddha provided instructions as follows: Once serenity is reached in tranquil meditation, maintain that state. Soon after, there will be a release from that tranquility. Right as the mind is releasing from that state, be focused, conscious, and control the release from the tranquility such that it is incomplete². The part that is still serene to an extent is called *samādhī* (meditation) which is focused and determined, and is also known as *upacāra-samādhī*. Use insight-wisdom to contemplate the previous destructive consequences and perils inherent in attaining *jhāna*, such that one realizes that it is not the way to eliminate defilements and desires from the mind.

Practicing serenity in meditation and being attached to and infatuated with *jhāna* is likened to a stone sitting atop blades of grass. Once the stone is picked up, the blades of grass will stand up and grow just as before. The mind that is infatuated with and attached to the tranquility from meditation and *jhāna* merely sits on top of defilements and desire. Once serenity in meditation and *jhāna* dissolve, defilements and desire, both small and large, will stand up and grow in the mind just as before.

Those people will then use insight-wisdom to realize and understand the realities of the ultimate truth, the four elements (earth, air, fire, water) and five aggregates (perceived form, feeling, memory, imagination or mental formations, and consciousness) according to the Three Common Characteristics (impermanence, suffering, cessation of existence in the supposed

2. This is similar to waking up in the morning. Before fully awakening, do not open your eyes. Use this partially awake and fully conscious state to contemplate your dream or any other issues. Your consciousness will be especially sharp and keen. In meditation, the incomplete release from the tranquil state (*upacāra-samādhī*) is likened to the partially awake and fully conscious state described here.

form). Contemplate such that there is realization and understanding of the human body as filthy and repulsive. Soon thereafter, the body will fall and decompose back into the four elements of this earth, just as before.

With repeated and constant contemplation of these matters, those people will experience dispassion or disinterest and boredom with pleasure, passion, and lust. The mind will then escape into *nibbāna*. Therefore, the *arahant* of this nature are deemed *cetovimutti*. *Cetovimutti* is those who have previously practiced serene meditation and *jhāna* and have come to use wisdom to contemplate the ultimate truth afterwards. Once one has attained ultimate enlightenment, recreational use of *jhāna* and *abhiññā* is not problematic.

Discernment to Contemplate the Three Common Characteristics

The mind's infatuation with the world is called ignorance or delusion (*avijjā*), which is ignorance of the undisputable truth that has permitted the infatuation with defilements and imagination or volitional mental formations. Whichever direction desire and defilements desire to take, imagination will follow. Each day, there will be volitional mental formations according to the supposed forms and conventional truths of the world. The mind is thus infatuated with the world and has since been constantly reborn in it. This is due to the misperception, misunderstanding, and infatuation of this as the correct approach.

But, now that we know the truth, let us start over again. **Practice thinking in the way of *anicca*, that everything is impermanent, subject to change, and never to perpetually maintain its state.** Think in terms of the suffering that we experience as a repercussion from a particular cause. What is that cause? Once the cause of suffering is discerned, stop that cause. Even if desires and wanting arise, restrain the mind so that it is patient. Practice so that the mind has these characteristics, so the mind will be manageable and less frustrated.

Practice such that the mind knows how to refuse. Constantly train the mind to understand that within this world, nothing is a personal belonging. Money, gold, and possessions are merely worldly belongings that exist in this world. No matter how little or how much, understand that they are only factors that enable day to day survival. In a few days, whether sooner or later, there

will be a departure from these worldly belongings. If one is still worried and clinging to these worldly possessions, one will keep being reborn in the world. The mind will be reborn, without end, to that which it clings.

This is just like what has occurred from past lives to the present. Because of clinging to worldly possessions, we have been reborn again and again and will consequently die in the same fashion as before. Are you ready to refuse worldly belongings at this time? Constantly employ mindfulness and wisdom to train the mind to refuse these things. The mind will gradually loosen its attachment. Money and riches should be considered communal belongings within the family. Do not cling to these possessions such that suffering arises.

Suffering arises when we perceive an object as a personal belonging. The degree of suffering is directly correlated with the level of attachment to these belongings. If attachment is not present, then suffering of the mind does not arise as a result. It is not that acquiring these possessions is prohibited, because we still have a need to sustain our physical human form. It is necessary to earn a living and find food to enable our earthly forms to survive. Cultivate perfections of character in order to benefit from this lifetime. Use any method to support and enhance the virtue that forms within the mind. Understand that in this lifetime, it is important to cultivate a lot of merit and virtue so that this birth is not wasted.

With regards to contemplating non-self, or the cessation of existence in the supposed form (*anattā*), there is general understanding concerning the physical form or death. This kind

of thought examines the end result. This can be likened to examining a tree by looking at the branches and flowers, and perceiving that they are beautiful. There is a desire to see beautiful, large, and perfect flowers without knowledge of the cause, which is the healthy tree trunk. The cause for the trunk's being healthy is its healthy roots. The healthy roots are derived from perfect soil, fertilizer, and water. If the roots are healthy, then the other parts of the tree will accordingly be healthy. Likewise, *anattā* is contemplated in this manner.

Those who practice tend to heavily emphasize *anattā* as a foundation. It is difficult for this kind of reflection to result in *anattā*. This is because *anattā* results from its cause, *attā*. Self (*attā*) is the cause for non-self (*anattā*). Particularly regarding self as it relates to the form (which is the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire), it arises from its cause, maintains its state for a few days and then must revert back to its original basic elements. *Attā*, in the form aggregate, is a form that the mind resides in and is thus able to have a perceived existence. When the mind departs from the body, the body cannot move. The earth, water, air, and fire elements cannot operate.

This is like a puppet on strings that can dramatize emotions. Without the strings controlling it, the puppet cannot convey any emotions whatsoever. Similarly, the human physical form can move because the mind controls it and the four elements operate normally. If the mind departs from the body, all components will cease functioning. In a couple of days, it will rot and decay and will be cremated in a fire. Only ashes will remain. There will be no way to construct a human from those ashes. This is *anattā*. Use wisdom to contemplate this regularly.

The mind will realize according to the truth once wisdom is used for this contemplation. This realization is called *sammā-diṭṭhi*, which is correct and just perception, along with an understanding of the truth. *Sammā-diṭṭhi* is classified as either *dassana-ñāṇa* (realization followed by understanding corresponding to the truth) or *ñāṇa-dassana* (understanding followed by realization corresponding to the truth).

Resources for *Dhamma* Practice

There are two methods of practice:

1. Training by prohibiting thought. This is a method of continually focusing on any one phrase, or consciously concentrating on the emotions that emerge from the mind. This is the mode of prohibiting thought.

2. Training by using thought to analyze ultimate truths. For example, upon seeing an elderly and sick person, internalize that image and use personal reflection to see that another person's aging and sickness is the same as that which will occur to us. Let that parallel attribute the same characteristics to that person as well as us. We too will age, become sick, and pass away just like everyone else because everyone is born from elements that age, become sick, and pass away. Once born, life will persist for a period and then death will take over. The understanding of these common characteristics is right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which is correct and just understanding of the truth. Upon understanding this concept, the first level of wisdom has been initiated. Wisdom, realization, and understanding of other ultimate truths (*sacca-dhamma*) will expand. The realization and understanding of the mind will be more lucid and obvious. This is what is called having thorough method in one's thought. Detailed and thorough understanding of issues that were previously confusing will suddenly emerge.

“Cittam dantaṃ sukhāvaham”

The mind that is well trained in wisdom will have encompassing and lucid knowledge of ultimate truths, and the mind will be peaceful at all times.

Doubt or contempt for the truth will not exist because the all-encompassing wisdom will have eliminated all doubt from the mind. Where will the clinging and attachment come from? Thus, using wisdom to train the mind is incredibly important, just as it is important for parents to teach their children to be good. Wisdom used to train the mind to develop wide and encompassing knowledge is the same. Normally, the mind believes its wrong perceptions are right and that is why the mind is ignorant and delusional. This nescience called absence of knowledge (*avijjā*), the mind’s blindness and existence in the dark.

A blind mind refers to a mind without wisdom, just like a person who is congenitally blind. Tasks cannot be successfully completed that involve travelling to a completely foreign location. This task is excruciatingly difficult for the blind. Likewise, a blind mind that lacks wisdom to realize the ultimate truth does not know the methods or examples to use in practice. Arriving at the path and results is excruciatingly difficult.

These days, the Buddha is not present to identify the parallels and examples to use in order arrive at the path to enlightenment. Thus, practitioners must rely on their own mindfulness, wisdom, and ability. If incorrect knowledge is drawn from the scriptures, then incorrect perception will result. If these conclusions are applied in practice, then wrong practice will result. In his time,

the Buddha used examples to teach everyone how to eliminate wrong view, as the first step. People who practice in our times only understand the textbook version of right view. This is why they are not able to extinguish the deep misunderstandings they possess in their minds.

Misperception, misunderstanding, and delusion are characteristics that have been long ingrained within the mind. This ignorance is thus called *avijjā*, the mind's blindness. The mind is ignorant of its misunderstandings and, because it is unaware, misinterprets its wrong perceptions as right. Knowledge carried from scriptures is nothing more than knowledge. It cannot be used to untangle or ameliorate misunderstandings.

Therefore, mindfulness and wisdom must be practiced so that an intelligent and encompassing knowledge emerges within one's mind. Call on this knowledge for analysis and examination until discernment of right and wrong emerges. Make decisions on the basis of fair and just reason. If decisions are biased and self-interested, the misunderstanding of misperceptions as correct will continue to occur. Understand what is right according to the truth. Once people have established the foundation of correct understanding, practicing *dhamma* will be easy because they would have entered the path to enlightenment. Those people will be confident that their way of practice is exactly the same as what the Buddha had intended.

Interpret the Buddha's Teachings Well

In current times, many masters and sects claim to practice the Buddha's way. Upon observation, these methods are incongruent, while each asserts that its practice is correct. As a consequence, different sects have emerged. This is like blind men groping an elephant. Wherever one man touches, he believes that single part corresponds to the entire elephant. Each man believes he truly understands what the elephant is. In the same vein, in our times each sect believes it truly understand the Buddha's history. Problems arise from discrepancies in perception. So factions have arisen, as we know:

1. *Mahāyāna*

2. *Theravāda*

Within these two schools, there are differing views on the Buddha's teachings. As a result, there are even more divisions within these factions.

Interpretation of the Buddha's teachings after the fifth council of the *Saṅgha* in order to settle questions of doctrine and to fix the text of the scriptures had passed. Then there was the era of knowledgeable scholars who inherited and maintained the religion. In this period, interpretations, changes and additions were made to the Buddha's teachings. While many of the Buddha's teachings are reliable, others have been rearranged so that the order does not directly correspond to the original teachings. To illustrate, the three disciplines as people know it are moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla*, *samādhi*,

and *paññā*) have been abridged from the Noble Eightfold Path. Instead of keeping the original order that the Buddha laid down, it has been rearranged.

Sammā-diṭṭhi and *sammā-saṅkappa* both fall under the wisdom or *paññā* heading.

Sammā-vācā, *sammā-kammanta* and *sammā-ājīva* all fall under the moral conduct or *sīla* heading.

Sammā-vāyāma, *sammā-sati* and *sammā-samādhi* all fall under the concentration or *samādhi* heading.

The three disciplines according to the original grouping is wisdom, moral conduct, and then concentration (*paññā*, *sīla*, *samādhi*). In The Buddha's era, many of the followers he taught were able to become *ariya-puggala*. This is because the path the Buddha had delineated was the correct and true starting point. In our era, moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*) is practiced. Research for the sake of knowledge is fine. But if that knowledge is to be applied to practice, it is crucial to use the Buddha's original teaching of wisdom, moral conduct, and concentration (*paññā*, *sīla*, *samādhi*).

The reason I have expressed this opinion is because there is reliable evidence. Thus the Pali phrase the Buddha proclaimed,

“Esa dhammo sanantano”

All *dhamma* is ancient.

Many meanings can be derived from the phrase, “all *dhamma* is ancient.” I will explain it in terms of the Noble Eightfold Path,

which itself is ancient. The Noble Eightfold Path is a heading that can be used in both worldly and transcendental *dhamma* practice. It depends on which character with which the practitioner is more comfortable. All the previous Buddhas have started their teachings with the Noble Eightfold Path, especially *sammā-diṭṭhi*, correct perception of the truth, and *sammā-saṅkappa*, wisdom to contemplate according to the truth. These are ancient truths. The methods of practice all pointed in the same direction. Thus,

***“Sabba-pāpassa akaraṇaṃ, kusalassūpasampadā,
sacitta-pariyodapanāṃ, etaṃ buddhāna-sāsanaṃ”***

These three headings are the teachings of every Buddha. It is evidently clear that these three subjects are contained in the Noble Eightfold Path. The translation is: abstinence from committing bad deeds of action, speech and thought; the perpetuation of committing good deeds of action, speech and thought; the constant practice of mind purification; these are the teachings of all Buddhas, which is ancient. Understand this accordingly.

***Sammā-diṭṭhi*, in particular, is the center of all *dhamma* headings or subjects.** All Buddhas must start from *sammā-diṭṭhi*, correct perception. The realization and understanding of the truth all transpire in the same manner. *Āsavakkhayañāṇa*, the realization that mental intoxications (*āsava*) will cease, arises and occurs in the same fashion. The enlightenment of every Buddha is the same. Defilements, desires, and mental intoxications, both small and large, are completely extinguished in the same way. You all know that the Buddha was enlightened by the Four Noble Truths.

Suffering, the cause of suffering, the extinction of suffering, and the path to extinguish it (*dukkha, samudaya, nirodha, magga*), are all ancient truths and all Buddhas must be enlightened in the same way. This is the tradition of all Buddhas.

All of the disciples of the *Buddha Kakusandha*, the *Buddha Koṇāgamana*, the *Buddha Kassapa*, and the *Buddha Gotama* had *āsavakkhayañāṇa* and the realization that mental intoxications will cease occur the same way. Achieving ultimate enlightenment was consequently the same. Even the disciples of the *Buddha Metteyya* and other Buddhas to come, will all have *āsavakkhayañāṇa* in the same manner. Therefore, *dhamma* that is ancient has been around forever. And *ariya-puggala* of other levels reached emancipation by ancient *dhamma*, as well.

There is another ancient *dhamma* that the Buddha has stated,

“Hatthipadaṃ tesaṃ aggamakkhāyati,

sammādiṭṭhi tesaṃ dhammānaṃ aggamakkhāyati”

The footprints of all legged animals are encompassed by a footprint of an elephant.

Likewise, all *dhamma* is encompassed by right views.

If one understands the meaning of the Buddha’s statement, one will immediately understand that *sammā-diṭṭhi* is the starting point for all *dhamma*. Whether it is under wisdom, moral conduct, concentration (*paññā, sīla, samādhi*), or any other heading, everything is encompassed by *sammā-diṭṭhi*. *Dhamma* practice must start correctly, according to the Buddha’s teachings, in order to be fruitful.

Consider that training nowadays is confusing and messed up because the starting point is incorrect. And educated scholars interpret and define the Buddha's teachings in a perplexing manner. Researchers understand according to the scriptures, but if the scriptures are incorrect and the interpretation is incorrect, then the resulting understanding is also incorrect.

People who practice the Four Noble Truths these days differ in understanding and consequently, in practice. If someone possesses wisdom and draws the correct meaning from the Four Noble Truths, then that person will have an opportunity to become an *ariya-puggala* in this lifetime.

A person may become an *ariya-puggala* in this lifetime for three reasons:

1. The state of having done meritorious actions in the past
2. The correct understanding of the truth as The Buddha has laid forth.
3. Continuous diligence, during every posture.

If someone has satisfied these three conditions, then that person will attain a level of enlightenment in this lifetime. In current times, practitioners must rely heavily on their mindfulness, concentration or meditation, and wisdom. The mind must train its personal ability so that it is exceptionally capable. If those who practice possess decisive ability, they will have great motivation to practice. Without ability in mindfulness and wisdom, training is futile. Regardless of the knowledge of various categories of

dhamma, none of that knowledge can be applied to practice due to lack of ability.

The headings of moral conduct and concentration or meditation are merely knowledge in literature. It is just like raw produce and animal meat from the market. They must be crafted into the desired food product in order to be edible. Similarly, with regards to practice, selecting the strategy and *dhamma* heading that best corresponds to one's character will fashion a simpler path to enlightenment.

Selecting the Proper Leader

Dhamma practitioners who are in search of a leader must be observant and rational. Do not conduct yourself as someone so attached to a leader that you lose sight of *dhamma*. This is just like a group of oxen that search for their leader to bring them across the stream. As there are many leaders of the oxen, which one will be chosen as the leader? The group of oxen must consider this and make an independent decision. Just don't select a blind ox as the leader or he might rush the group of oxen to getting stuck in the stream. Instead, if the ox has good vision and knows how to get across the stream, then he will be ready to guide all the other oxen across the stream safely. This includes all oxen except those who like to go astray from the leader.

Likewise, we who are training and preparing ourselves at this time must all seek out a proper leader to guide us in the right direction. But for the leader to be proper and accurate like in the Buddha's time is incredibly unlikely. In those days, the Buddha was the leader and the disciples had analytic insight and were ready to comprehensively explain things to all the followers. Furthermore, the examples of practice were all in the same format. That is why so many in that era became *ariya-puggala*.

Abhidhamma

The subject of *abhidhamma* (the higher doctrine) that we all recognize is known from the Pali Canon. I will provide the reason that *abhidhamma* happened after the Buddha was enlightened. In the fifth rains retreat, the Buddha taught the doctrine to his mother in the *Tāvātimsā* heaven. He spent one rains retreat there, preaching *abhidhamma* to his mother and the heavenly beings (*devas*). The details are written in texts.

At the end of the rains retreat, The Buddha returned to the human world and taught *abhidhamma* to *Sāriputta* at the town of *Sankassa*. He did this so that *Sāriputta* would be his witness of these teachings and so that Buddhist followers would not wonder where he was and what he was doing for three months in the *Tāvātimsā* Heaven. What was the nature of *abhidhamma*? The Buddha had taught *Sāriputta* all of it. This is the reason for *abhidhamma*. *Sāriputta*, who was the best in terms of wisdom, was able to remember all of the *abhidhamma* and also recorded it.

Abhidhamma is only one subject out of many. It is specific and particular to selected occasions, and the Buddha preached it only to the *devas*. It is too detailed for humans to comprehend. Just how detailed, you should research for your own knowledge. The *deva* realm is comprised of four aggregates: feeling, memory, mental formations or imagination, and consciousness. *Abhidhamma* has mental factors and states as its foundation, with details available in various texts. One should research the reason why *abhidhamma* came about.

Abhidhamma occurred once the Buddha reached the fifth rains retreat. As for the question of what the Buddha preached between the first and fourth rains retreats, the answer is that *abhidhamma* had not yet happened. So what *dhamma* did he preach? The texts clearly show that it was definitely not *abhidhamma*.

In the Buddha's time, he preached many subjects to many followers who attained various stages of enlightenment. There is nothing in historical records stating that the Buddha used *abhidhamma* to teach anyone. What is more, there is no history asserting that any person listened to *abhidhamma* from the Buddha, consequently attained emancipation, and became an *ariya-puggala*.

Sāriputta carried on the account of *abhidhamma* from the Buddha for the purpose of recording it and for other monks to study. He did not use *abhidhamma* to teach anyone else to train in that way. He knew from his own experience that when he was a lay person who listened to *dhamma* from *Assaji*, he was able to understand and attain *sotāpanna*. The *dhamma* *Assaji* shared with him was not *abhidhamma*, rather it was the ultimate truth that everything arises from a cause and ceases when the cause ceases.

If one only studies the history of *ariya-puggala* in the Buddha's times, which is abundant in the discourses, it will be evident that the Buddha used people as examples. He would illustrate that one group used one heading of *dhamma* to become *ariya-puggala*. One should study this carefully because there is ample reason to support this. And one will realize the origin of *abhidhamma* as I have previously detailed.

Conclusion

This history of the Buddha which is explained here may have many points of contention for people if they have only studied the Thai version. If the history from other countries is incorporated or combined it may be perceived that the information is incorrect. The reason is that the Buddha's history is different in each country. However, the histories share similarities in some points.

Therefore, the reader should use balanced rationality in weighing the reasons according to the truth. What is possible and what is not? What has sufficient reason for one to be more believable than another? As an illustration, the Buddha's encountering the four divine messengers is different from the Thai version, as I have already explained.

Another point is the floating of the golden tray. There are two implications of *Bhikkhu Siddhattha's* aspiration. If he would become a Buddha, the golden tray would float upstream, against the current. If he would not become a Buddha, the golden tray would follow the current as it floated downstream. The golden tray floated upstream, so the Buddha used the tray as a parallel for contemplation.

He internalized the parallel and compared the golden tray to his own mind. He reasoned with wisdom and taught his own mind to float against the current of the world. He did this until wisdom emerged and he understood and realized according to the truth that everything is subject to change. There is nothing that maintains perpetually. But humans cannot accept this

impermanence, and thus experience suffering. Humans do not desire to be apart from belongings, and consequently both the clinging and the perception that we are defined by those possessions arise. And the mind desires to gain, to possess, and to be. It clings tightly and is reborn in this endless cycle.

The Buddha had the wisdom to deny his mind from having incorrect perceptions, incorrect understandings, and from the worldly delusions of previous lives. The Buddha knew the cause and factors involved in birth. Desire, pleasure, attachment, and clinging tight to fine sense pleasures cause an endless rebirth in the Three Realms. The Buddha used wisdom to contemplate this extensively. *Ñāṇa-dassana* arose in the Buddha's mind and he understood and realized the truth. *Vipassanā-ñāṇa* and *āsavakkhayañāṇa* emerged and he was enlightened as a Buddha because of this.

There is another point concerning *ñāṇa-dassana*, which means understanding before realization. For example, forming an understanding from someone's description that a tiger looks a certain way, without actually seeing one. This is a trait of *ñāṇa-dassana*, understanding without seeing or realizing. *Dassana-ñāṇa* relates to realization before understanding. For instance, upon seeing a tiger in real life but not understanding what it is, one might venture to guess that it is a big cat. This is likened to the fisherman that was explained earlier. Understanding on its own is not sufficient. Therefore, understanding without realization may result in a mistake. Realization on its own may produce similar results.

In the texts, only *ñāṇa-dassana* is described. *Dassana-ñāṇa* was encountered in the Laotian versions, which contained reason and credibility. That is why I have written about it here for you to study. True understanding indicates *ñāṇa*, while true realization relates to *dassana* (wisdom). *Dhamma* practice must incorporate both understanding as well as realization so that results materialize. This is just like how clapping with two hands produces sound, while clapping with one hand does not. *Dhamma* practices in contemporary times does mention *ñāṇa-dassana* to a small degree because it is merely touched on in texts.

In practice, there is only an insight (*ñāṇa*) that understands emotions have arisen, but there is no realization of the cause behind those emotions. Or in the alternate case, one speaks from manuals without personal understanding. The mind will never loosen its clinging and attachment to various objects. This is like seeing the image of a tiger on paper and understanding that it is a tiger. There is no fear. But once a tiger is seen in real life, fear will arise.

Understanding from manuals without realizing the truth is likened to only understanding *dhamma* by name, without realizing *dhamma*. Similarly, this is analogous to knowing the name of a criminal without ever seeing his face. It is impossible to catch the criminal. In the same vein, learning *dhamma* from manuals will not eliminate defilements, desires, or misperceptions within the mind. Or sometimes people understand the undisputable truth but see it as a normal and common occurrence, like seeing an old person, a sick person, and a deceased person. These people are not smart. They do not have the insight to know that the truth of

what they have seen is the suffering, destructive consequences, and perils that cause countless rebirths in this endless cycle.

I apologize in advance for the example that follows. If one takes a photograph of fresh feces, the photograph will not incite disgust. It is possible to eat dinner while looking the photograph without being repulsed. If you are brave enough, bring the fresh feces to the dinner table while you are eating. Once you see and smell it at the same time, what do you feel? Likewise, practicing *dharmā* with both *ñāṇa-dassana* (understanding and realization) and *dassana-ñāṇa* (realization and understanding), according to the ultimate truth, will correct false perceptions from wrong to right.

The Buddha used wisdom to contemplate the truth and his mind achieved right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and the wisdom to contemplate according to the truth (*sammā-saṅkappa*). The Buddha thus announced and guaranteed that he had encountered the correct path to enlightenment on his own. This is because the undisputable truth is the ancient truth which has been around forever. Humans do not recognize this ultimate truth and are consequently delusional because they lack wisdom to understand and realize these worldly truths. The Buddha used right view, as the initial starting point and the central foundation for other subjects.

Upon reading this book, you may encounter many parts that cause you to wonder. If you have any questions, please ask me directly. If you ask someone else, their perception and interpretation may be different. If you have any quandaries from the texts and manuals you have read, I am ready to be your council so that you can develop understanding from foundations

of reason, cause, and effect. Use the truth as the deciding factor. If you have any misgivings from the books I have written, or from any subject of *dhamma*, ask me directly. If you have tied a knot and cannot undo it, I will undo it for you.

With the power of mindfulness, concentration, wisdom, and perfections cultivated from past lives, may you understand and realize the truth, with your own mindfulness and wisdom.

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño



Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño

(May 20, 1935 – Nov 11, 2008)

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño (Phra Banyapisantaera) was born in 1935, and ordained as a monk in 1961. He was a pupil of renowned *Venerable Ācariya Khao Anālayo* of Wat Tam Klong Paen in the Nong Bua Lam Phu province of Thailand. In his early years, *Ācariya Thoon* set out to various forest destinations and practiced *dhmma* until he profoundly realized and understood according to the truth that Buddha had laid forth.

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño dedicated his life to the proliferation of Buddha's original teachings. Having achieved ultimate emancipation as an *arahant* in 1969, *Ācariya Thoon* spent the remainder of his life teaching the truth (*dhmma*) to practitioners both in Thailand and abroad.

Ācariya Thoon's style of *dhmma* practice is distinctive in that he emphasized the ability for laypeople to effectively practice in everyday settings. He stressed the importance of developing a comprehensive understanding of the suffering, harmful consequences, and perils associated with each issue.

Wat Pa Ban Koh at Udon Thani (in the northeastern region of Thailand), the temple *Ācariya Thoon* founded in 1975, serves as a Buddhist landmark for generations of Buddhists to honor and venerate Buddha's teachings and His relics housed in the great pagoda.

The temples founded in *Ācariya Thoon's* name in the metropolitan cities San Francisco, New York, and Hong Kong, as well as the countless *dhmma* retreat centers in America and throughout Thailand that train in *Ācariya Thoon's* style of cultivating wisdom (*pañña*) continue to grow exponentially, to this day.

Ācariya Thoon authored over twenty books, including his own autobiography, and produced various forms of media (mp3, VCD, DVD, etc.) so that *dhmma* practitioners from any walk of life could easily access *dhmma*. *Ācariya Thoon* also gave countless, memorable and life-changing sermons and blessed his followers with his infinite compassion, for which we will forever be indebted.

On November 11, 2008, *Venerable Ācariya Thoon* passed away at the age of seventy-three due to pneumonia and lung tumor complications. Unique to only the greatest *arahants*, *Venerable Ācariya Thoon's* relics formed the day of his cremation ceremony.

About The Translator

San Francisco native Neecha Thian-Ngern holds a Bachelors of Science in Electrical Engineering from UC San Diego and a Masters in Business Administration. Neecha has been a devout follower of *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* since the age of 16.

For many years, Neecha's mother was on an unfruitful quest to encounter a master to illuminate the path to cessation of suffering. Skeptical by nature, Neecha was never convinced nor moved by their many *dhmma* sermons that lacked rationality. Everything changed when Neecha's mother began following *Ācariya Thoon* in 1998. Through a single, brief encounter with *Ācariya Thoon* in the summer of 1999, Neecha was able to see that she must first catch the snake instead of attacking the person who threw it at her. She also came to realize the most crucial and indisputable truth – that she was the sole cause of all of her stress and suffering.

From that point on, armed with *Ācariya Thoon's* concentrated and insightful models of *dhmma* practice, she applied simple parallels from her daily surroundings to scrub away at her personal anguish and attachments. She extracted and confronted her feelings, and worked to realize and understand the truth behind them. Under the tutelage of Mae Yo, and through the constant application of rational internalized reflection, Neecha has been able to dramatically limit the frequency of her emotional volcanic eruptions as well as conflicts with friends, family, and coworkers.

Deeply grateful for *Ācariya Thoon's* unique and practical approach to *dhamma* practice, she is inspired to communicate his message to the English speaking public. Neecha has been entrusted with translating all of *Ācariya Thoon's* books. To date, she has published three of his books and one sermon. Neecha produces video content for [KPY Productions](#) and is one of the organizers and instructors at the annual KPY USA Retreats.