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THE BHAVANA SOCIETY'S DHAMMA STUDY GUIDE--LEVEL ONE

Introduction

Completed in December of 2003, this course of thirty lessons serves to introduce a novice layperson or a new resident at Bhavana Society to six main topics of Theravadan Buddhism:

1. The life of the Buddha (three lessons), pages 2-9;
2. A simple history of Theravadan Buddhism (one lesson), pages 10-11;
3. *Samatha* (concentration) Meditation (two lessons), pages 12-15;
4. *Vipassana* (insight) Meditation (two lessons), pages 16-19;
5. The Four Noble Truths (six lessons), pages 20-31;
6. The Noble Eightfold Path (sixteen lessons), pages 32-63;

Students of Theravadan Buddhism receiving this study guide are encouraged to read through it lesson by lesson and to complete the lesson review questions in the space provided or in a separate notebook. Students are also encouraged to learn as many of the concepts and terms as is useful and practical to their study of the Dhamma.

This project was completed by the Bhavana Society Board of Directors serving in 2002 and 2003 in response to a request by the Venerable Bhante Henepola Gunaratana. Contributors to the writing of this course include Bhante Yogavacara Rahula, Bhante Khemaratana, Athula Seneviratne, Carole Rogentine, Nick Rogentine, Chris O'Keefe, Walter Schwidetzsky, and Rob Sherwood.

A second part of this Dhamma Study Guide is being prepared that will cover the Five Hindrances, the Twelve Stages of Dependent Origination, the Principle of Merit, Kamma and rebirth, the Ten Perfections, and Buddhism in America.

May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful!

Lesson One: Life of Buddha from Birth to Renunciation

It was the year 563 BCE. The day was the full moon day of the month of May. The city was Kapillvatthu on the Indian border of present-day Nepal. An expectant mother, Queen Maha Maya, who was visiting her parents, entered the Lumbini Park for a little rest and felt labor pains. On that day at that place a noble prince destined to be a great religious leader was born. The father of the noble prince was King Suddhodana who belonged to the Sakya clan.

Ascetic Asita, also known as Kaladevala, who was then well known for high spiritual attainments, experienced an unusual feeling of joyfulness all around while in his daytime meditation. He soon discovered that the reason for his joyfulness was the birth of this noble Prince. He paid an unexpected visit to the royal father who was celebrating the birth of his illustrious son. Ascetic Asita had once been the King Suddhodana's spiritual teacher. The King felt honored by the unexpected visit of his teacher and carried the child over to him to pay due reverence. Foreseeing the child's future greatness with supernormal vision, the Ascetic rose from his seat and saluted the child with clasped hands. Seeing the action of his teacher, the royal father did likewise--saluting the child with clasped hands for the first time.

On the fifth day after the birth of the Prince he was named Siddhartha, meaning "a wish fulfilled." His family name was Gotama. Thus, the Prince became known as Siddhartha Gotama. Seven days after the birth of Prince Siddhartha Gotama, the Queen Mother Maha Maya died. Thereafter, Maha Pajapathi Gotami, younger sister of Queen Maha Maya, who was also married to the King, adopted the Prince Siddhartha Gotama.

In the agricultural society of that time an accepted custom was for the King to actively participate in a ploughing festival to encourage agriculture. When it was his turn, King Suddhodana took the little Prince with him. The baby was kept under a rose-apple tree for shade. Festivities were so grand those who attended the child moved away from the child to get a better view. All alone, under the shade, away from noise, the little Prince--driven by long practiced habits of previous births--began to sit cross-legged and practice reminiscence meditation to gain the one-pointedness of mind known as Samadhi and thus developed the first Jhana. Seeing his baby son in deep meditation, King Suddhodana saluted the child with clasped hands for the second time.

Little is known about the childhood of Prince Siddhartha Gotama other than he was an intelligent student and well behaved. Going by what we find in reports by historians, there is little doubt that the Prince would have had an education fit for a scion of the warrior race, which would likely have included training in the art of warfare. At the early age of sixteen, the Prince Siddhartha Gotama married his cousin Princess Yasodara. After the marriage, for nearly thirteen years the Royal couple enjoyed a blissful married life of luxury and worldly well-being.

One day while riding with his charioteer Channa across the city, Prince Siddhartha noted four signs with his penetrating mind that changed his outlook forever. Gazing upon an old man he reflected: when a man, despite being subject to aging, sees another who is aged, the man is often shocked, humiliated and disgusted, for he forgets that he himself is no exception. The Prince thought, I too am subject to aging, and so it cannot befit me to be

shocked, humiliated and disgusted by another who is aged. With that consideration, the vanity of youth left him.

Then, he gazed upon a man who was sick and thought: when a man, who is himself subject to all forms of sickness, sees another who is sick, he is shocked, humiliated and disgusted, for he forgets that he himself is no exception. He thought, I too am subject to sickness, and so it cannot befit me to be shocked, humiliated and disgusted on another who is sick. With that consideration, the vanity of health left him.

Then, further upon his journey with the charioteer, Prince Siddhartha saw a dead person. Again, he reflected: when a man, who is subject to death, sees another who is dead, he is shocked, humiliated and disgusted, for he forgets that he himself is no exception. He thought, I too am subject to death, and so it cannot befit me to be shocked, humiliated and disgusted on another who is dead. With that consideration, the vanity of life left him.

Seeing a recluse happy with the little he had, going forth alone mindfully and concentrating on the path, Prince Siddhartha Gotama thought: house life is crowded and dusty; life gone forth is wide open. Suppose I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the house life into homelessness? After much deliberation, realizing the worthlessness of sensual pleasures, he decided to leave the palace in search of truth and eternal peace. Just about that time a message came that Princess Yasodhara gave birth to a baby boy. An ordinary father would have welcomed the joyful tidings, but to Prince Siddhartha Gotama the news was less joyous: "An impediment has been born; a fetter has arisen," he thought. Later, his grandfather named the infant son Rahula.

That night Prince Siddhartha Gotama went to the chamber but did not enter. He stood on the threshold for a while, gazing at his wife and son who were fast asleep. Great was his compassion for the two dear ones, but greater was his compassion for suffering humanity. It was his twenty-ninth year; Prince Siddhartha Gotama left his permanent abode at the palace with his charioteer Channa riding on the horse Kanthaka. He journeyed far, crossing the river Anoma. On its banks he shaved his hair and beard, handed over his royal garments to Channa to return to the palace. Now the ascetic Siddhartha, in yellow robes, barefooted and bareheaded, walked away as a penniless wanderer with no permanent abode.

Lesson One Review Questions:

1. Construct a family tree of Prince Siddhartha Gotama.
2. This lesson listed two occasions King Suddhodana saluted his son Prince Siddhartha Gotama with clasped hands. What was the first occasion?
3. What was the second occasion?
4. Explain the four signs that led Prince Siddhartha Gotama to go forth to homelessness.
5. Outline the circumstances of the Prince Siddhartha Gotama's renunciation journey.

More about the Context of the Buddha's Renunciation of his Family

By Venerable Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, Nyaka Thera

As soon as Siddhartha was born into a royal family, the whole country came to know about his birth. Astrologers came, and they predicted this child's future. Two astrologers said that either he would stay home or he would renounce the world. A third astrologer said that he would renounce the world. So, everybody in the country of Siddhartha's birth knew that he was destined to renounce his princely station in life.

When he came to marry, the girl whom he married, Yasodharā, also knew about these prophecies. Yasodharā was from that country, from that area, and knew quite well that Siddhartha was going to leave home and become an ascetic. Knowing that, she agreed to marry him. She was a very intelligent woman. According to Buddhist traditions she also had performed perfections, *pāramis*, to become his wife. From the day they married, she certainly noticed that her husband was a contemplative man, very quiet, very peaceful.

Even in his childhood, when other children were playing, prince Siddhartha would go and sit under a tree to meditate. When other children were hurting animals, he would rescue animals. The description of his childhood very clearly gives the impression that he was a contemplative boy; similarly he was a contemplative young man. Yasodharā knew all this. And every time she saw him sitting somewhere, quietly contemplating or meditating, she would tell him,

"Darling, don't worry. I know you are going to leave the palace. I know that. All the astrologers have told that. Everybody in the country knows that. We all notice that that is what you are. That is what you want. Darling, I love you no matter what decision you make. I love you so much I will do anything for you without any hesitation. You make a decision. I will be with you. I will accept your decision."

This is what a loving woman would tell her husband. And she gave her word to him, "You make any decision, I will support you. Not only what. I know you are going to leave, but don't leave without giving me a child. Then when you leave, I will have somebody to remind me of you. I can see your child when you are away."

When a woman sees her child, she remembers her husband. It's a natural psychological truth. So she told him, "You give me a baby. But don't stay at home, because, even though we have a child, you would be miserable. You always would be thinking of leaving home. That is your destiny, written in your horoscope. Everybody knows that is what you are going to do. Therefore, the very same day the child is born, you come and have a look, have a look at the child, and then leave. I will make all arrangements for you to leave the palace. Don't worry about the child, and don't worry about me. I'm in your father's palace. Your father has provided me with plenty of servants. Your mother is just like my mother. She loves me. And therefore I am in a secure place. I am protected. Please don't worry about me."

Today, in our modern society, everyone worries about the economy, their jobs, their money, their social security, their health insurance, and so on. To see the full context of

Siddhartha's decision to leave his wife and his child, however, we have to understand that this happened two thousand six hundred years ago, in India, in Indian society. Indian society was and, to a large extent still is, a culture in which marriage joined families in a legal and social contract. When you married, you married into the whole family of your spouse. Thus in the King's palace of Siddhartha's family, everything was perfectly arranged for Yasodharā to live comfortably. So, with this comfort, with this security, with this understanding, and with this utmost love, she agreed to let him go.

Siddhartha promised, "Darling, whenever I find what I am looking for, I will come back and see you." So with this assurance, with this security, he left. As soon as he left, her father-in-law and mother-in-law took her as their own child. You never see one single report of a quarrel, disagreement or resentment in the family. They all supported her and she was very comfortable.

As soon as Siddhartha attained enlightenment, he came home. When he came home the child was seven years old. While everybody else gathered for a family reunion, the Buddha went to Yasodharā's bedroom and sat down. She came and, catching his ankles, she cried with joy of seeing him after seven years. She did not say, "Go away, you abandoned my child and you abandoned me and you are disloyal, ungrateful, unfaithful. Go away, get out!" She did not say that.

She was so glad, so full of joy. Without uttering a word, catching his ankles she cried until his feet were soaked by her tears. Not only that. Then she addressed her child and said, "Darling, this is your father. See, this majestic looking person is your father. He has hidden wealth. Go and ask him for it."

So she sent her own child. This child went and, holding his finger, said, "Father, Daddy, even your shadow makes me happy, makes me calm, makes me peaceful. I love you. I heard that you have wealth. Give me that wealth."

Buddha said, "My son, I give you wealth which is imperishable. Any wealth that you get from the world will be perishable. I give you imperishable wealth." So he took him to the monastery and ordained him.

Eventually, then, what happened to Siddhartha Gotama's family? Buddha's stepmother became a nun, his wife became a nun, his cousin Ananda became a monk, his son became a monk. Buddha's father, King Suddhodana, attained the *anagami* state (the third level of Supramundane attainment). Buddha's father visited his mother in *Tusita*, a heavenly realm. Thus the Buddha's entire family was profoundly changed and blessed by the Buddha's own enlightenment.

Whenever we tell the life of the Buddha, we have to show the whole picture, including the difference in cultures, for people to fully understand. We have to show the real sociological, cultural, geographical, and religious background to present the picture properly.

Lesson Two: Life of Buddha from Renunciation to Enlightenment

(Note: Bhante Gunaratana writes a commentary "Siddhartha's Renunciation" which follows this lesson"

Renunciation--the going forth to homelessness--was a turning point in the life of the Buddha. The Buddha said, "It is not easy, living in a household, to lead a holy life as utterly perfect and pure.... I shaved off my hair and beard, put on yellow robe and went forth from house life into homelessness" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 36:100)....I have not gone forth to seek sense pleasures, for I see danger in them. And, seeing safe refuge from them in renouncing, that is my heart's desire" (*Samyutta Nikaya* 3:1). The Buddha's decision to renounce the householder life, which he did at age twenty-nine in 534 BCE, was a contemplated and calculated move. He went looking for a teaching that would lead to a holy life and a supreme state of peace.

His first teacher was Alara Kalama. The claim that "his teaching is such, one can enter upon and dwell in it, himself realizing through direct knowledge what his teacher knows" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 26, 36, 85, 100) attracted Siddhartha Gotama to study under this teacher. As reported in the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* (a *Sutta* is a source of Buddhist teaching), "Under guidance from Alara Kalama Siddhartha achieved up to the third meditative absorption of the Formless sphere" (*Essentials* 4). When the future Buddha "realized the base consisting of nothingness through direct knowledge," Alara Kalama invited Siddhartha to join with him to lead the community (*Life of the Buddha* 13). Yet, he thought: "This teaching does not lead to dispassion, to fading of lust, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to *Nibbana* [Liberation], but only to the base consisting of nothingness" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 26, 36, 85, 100). Not satisfied, he left the community to pursue his search.

Under his second teacher Uddaka Ramaputra, he achieved "the fourth meditative absorption of the Formless sphere and the still higher attainment of the base consisting of neither-perception-nor-non-perception" (*Essentials* 4). Recognizing his achievement, Uddaka Ramaputra offered Siddhartha Gotama leadership of the community (*Majjhima Nikaya* 26, 36, 85, 100). As before, the Buddha questioned his own attainment: "This teaching does not lead to dispassion, to fading of lust, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to *Nibbana*, but only to the base consisting of neither-perception-nor-non-perception" and he left the community, to pursue his search even further (*Majjhima Nikaya* 26, 36, 85,100).

He wandered through the Magadhan country and arrived at Senanigama near Uruvela. There he saw "an agreeable plot of ground, a delightful grove, a clear flowing river with pleasant smooth banks, and nearby a village as alms resort" and decided to stay put for a while (*Majjhima Nikaya* 26, 36, 85,100). According to the *Mahasihaanda Sutta*, at Senanigama Siddhartha resorted to austere ascetic practices and was joined by five ascetic friends--Kondanna, Bhaddiya,Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji--who supported his practice of self-mortification.

But Siddhartha had a new revelation after withstanding so much hardship: "Remote jungle-thicket abodes in the forest are hard to endure, seclusion is hard to achieve, isolation is hard to enjoy; one would think the jungles must rob a *bhikkhu* of his mind if he has no concentration" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 4). Nonetheless, Siddhartha endured the hard privations of this remote jungle ascetic life for six years. After six years he gave up extreme self-mortification and accepted the milk-rice given by Sujatha. Thinking he has become self-indulgent, and given up the struggle, the five monks left him. But

Siddhartha was contemplating his great future teachings that were to become known as "The Middle Way" and which emphasized achieving a balance between extremes.

Siddhartha Gotama went to Gaya on the eve of the full moon day in May of 528 BCE and sat cross-legged under a banyan tree (known as the *Bodhi* tree thereafter, from the Pali word meaning "enlightenment") firmly determined to realize the truth. He started meditating on his breathing. During the first part of the night he let go desires, craving, fear and attachment. In the second part of the night he realized the impermanence of life. In the third part of the night he found the way to end suffering, thus being fully awakened, became—the Buddha.

Lesson Two Review Questions:

1. What did Siddhartha Gotama achieve under Alara Kalama?
2. What did Siddhartha Gotama achieve under Uddaka Ramaputra?
3. Explain how Siddhartha Gotama found solace in living in the forest.
4. List the stages Siddhartha Gotama passed through on his way to be the fully awakened one--the Buddha.
5. What is the importance of the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment to your life?

Lesson Three: Enlightenment to *Parinibbana*

Here are the words purported to be spoken by the Buddha upon his attainment of enlightenment:

Through many a birth
I wandered in *samsara* [the cycle of rebirth]
Seeking, but not finding
The builder of this house.
Sorrowful is it to be born again and again.

O house-builder! [craving] Thou art seen.
Thou shalt build no house [body] again.
All thy rafters [passions] are broken.
Thy ridge-pole [ignorance] is shattered.
My mind has attained the unconditioned.
Achieved is the end of craving.

(*Dhammapada* 153-154)

The Buddha was thirty-five years old when he achieved enlightenment in 528 BCE. He spent the first 49 days after enlightenment in seven sessions of seven days each, sensitive to the bliss of release, reviewing the insights that helped in his awakening. In the first week he meditated under the *Bodhi* Tree, feeling *vimukti sukha* (the bliss of deliverance). At the end of seven days during the first watch of the night he kept his mind occupied with dependent arising in forward order and exclaimed: "When things are fully manifest....He

[the enlightened person] knows that each thing has to have its cause" (qtd. in *Life of the Buddha* 30). In the second watch he kept his mind occupied with dependent arising in reverse order and exclaimed: "When things are fully manifest.... He knows how all conditions come to an end" (qtd. in *Life of the Buddha* 31). In the third watch of the first week, the Buddha kept his mind occupied with dependent arising in forward and reverse order and exclaimed: "When things are fully manifest.... Like the sun which lights the sky, He stands repelling *Mara's* hosts [*Mara* refers to a deity similar to the Devil, the one who opposes liberation, and literally means "The Killer")" (qtd. in *Life of the Buddha* 31).

In the second week the Buddha paid respect to the Bodhi Tree that provided him shelter during his struggle for enlightenment. By so doing the Buddha sent a powerful message to the world: An act of paying respect reflects the character of the "giver" more than that of the "receiver." The receiver may even be indifferent to the kind of respect paid. Nevertheless, respect should be given from the heart of the person who received a benefit.

In the third week, the Buddha used his special (psychic) powers to create a golden bridge. He also practiced walking meditation. In the fourth week, the Buddha meditated in a jeweled chamber on *abidhamma* (the higher Dhamma). So pure and perfect was his knowledge, as well as his mind and body, that an aura of six colors emanated from his body. The six colors represented the noble qualities of the Buddha;

- Blue--confidence,
- Yellow--holiness,
- Red--wisdom,
- White--purity,
- Orange--desirelessness
- and a mixed color for all the above qualities combined.

On the fifth week after his *Nibbana* the Buddha went from the root of the Bodhi Tree to the root of *Ajapala Nigrodha*, a Banyan Tree, and there he continued to feel the bliss of deliverance. A person from the *Brahman* caste (highest level of Indian society) asked the Buddha: What makes a *Brahman*? And the Buddha answered: A *Brahman* is one "who is rid of evil things, not haughty, undefiled and self-controlled, perfect in knowledge, and living the *brahma*-life" (qtd. in *Essentials* 33). In other words, what the Buddha said was that one attains the highest rank in society through one's actions and character, not through one's birth alone. This statement opposed the social norms of the time (which persist to this day) and revealed how much of what the Buddha taught amounted to a vision of social reform in human society.

According to the *Jataka* commentary, it was in this fifth week that three daughters of *Mara*--identified as *Tanha*, *Rathie* and *Raga*--made a vain attempt to tempt the Buddha by their charm and skill. The Buddha went from the root of the *Ajapala Nigrodha* to the root of the *Mucalinda* Tree to spend the sixth week. An out-of-season storm brought seven days of heavy rain, cold winds and gloom. *Mucalinda*--the royal *naga* (serpent)--wrapped the Buddha's body seven times in his coils and stayed there all through the seven days with his great hood spread out above the Buddha's head. The Buddha exclaimed: "Seclusion is happiness for one contented, by whom Dhamma is learnt and who has seen; And friendliness towards the world is happiness for him who is forbearing with living beings (qtd. in Bhikkhu Nanamoli 34).

For the seventh week the Buddha decided to move from the root of the *Mucalinda* tree to *Rajayathana* Tree. Tapassu and Bhalluka, two travelling merchants, saw the Buddha and offered rice cake with honey. That was the first meal taken by the Buddha after his enlightenment. The merchants took refuge with the Buddha and began to learn the Dhamma and thus became the first lay disciples of the Buddha.

For these seven weeks, then, having enjoyed the bliss of release and well reviewed the insights he had gained, the Buddha was ready to share the knowledge of Dhamma. He visited the Deer Park in Isipathana and delivered the first sermon to the five ascetics who had at one time supported him in his struggle during his six years in the forest. The sermon is known as *Dhammachakka Sutta* or "The Wheel of Dhamma."

Thus begun, the wheel of Dhamma continued to roll for forty-five more years until the Buddha's *Parinibbana*-- the death or passing away of the Buddha. He was eighty years old, and the *Parinibbana* happened on the full moon day of the month May in the year 483 BCE. What the Buddha said and did over the forty-five years of his ministry, known as the *Dhamma*, provided the content of the lessons of this study guide and of the largest collection of religious doctrine ever recorded.

Here some gems from that teaching:

- "Investigate thoroughly, householder. It is good for such well-known people like you to investigate thoroughly" (*Upali Sutta-Majjhima Nikaya*).
- Kings and aristocrats came to the Buddha for guidance and advice, whereas the Buddha went to the poor, lonely and lost to help them.
- Giving a word of advice to Venerable Ananda, the Buddha said, "Ananda, do not preoccupy yourself about venerating the Perfect One's remains. Please strive for your own goal, devote yourself to your own goal, and dwell diligent, ardent and self-controlled for your own good...." (*Digha-nikkaya* 16; qtd. in *Essentials* 319).
- The Buddha's last utterance was "Indeed Bhikkhus, I declare this to you: It is in the nature of all formations to dissolve. Attain perfection through diligence" (*Digha-nikkaya* 16; *Anguttara -Nikkaya* 4:76; qtd. in *Essentials* 325).

Lesson Three Review Questions:

1. Summarize the first words spoken by the Buddha after his enlightenment and write your understanding of those words.
2. List how the Buddha spent his first 49 days after his enlightenment.
3. Who offered the first meal to the Buddha after his enlightenment?
4. Who were in attendance at the first sermon in the Deer Park at Issipathana?
5. In your view what is the significance of the Buddha's last utterance? Of his advice to Venerable Ananda about a practicing Buddhist?

Lesson One, Two, and Three Sources:

Essentials of Buddhism . Ven. Pategama Ganarama.

Singapore: Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore, 2000.

The Life of the Buddha. Bhikkhu Nanamoli. Sri Lanka:

Buddhist Publication Society, 1998.

Majjhima Nikaya (The Middle Length Discourses). (*suttas* are numbered)

Pali Text Society.

Samyutta Nikaya. (*suttas* are numbered) Pali Text Society.

Lesson Four: Introduction to Theravadan Buddhism

After 45 years of teaching, the Buddha passed away in his 80th year in 483 BCE. Tradition has it that a council of 500 elders ("elders" = *thera* in Pali) of the original Sangha met and agreed on the doctrine (*vada*) shortly after the Buddha's passing. Thus the most original form of Buddhism is known as Theravada, or Pali Theravadan Buddhism, which we practice at Bhavana today. These teachings were memorized and passed on by oral tradition for hundreds of years by disciples who spread Buddhism to much of the rest of India, Tibet, China, and Southeastern Asia. These teachings were in Pali, the language that Buddha spoke. This language was a sister language of Hindi and was once spoken extensively in central and western India, extending up into Nepal. This language is now defunct except as it is preserved in the Pali Canon (collection of Buddhism scripture in the Pali language) and the Theravadan practice of Buddhism.

About a century after Buddha's death divisions began to occur in the Sangha. The conservative wing held strictly to doctrine and practice as originally formulated; this group continued to be known as the School of Elders, or Theravada, and to keep its practice in Pali. The other group was more liberal and interpreted doctrine and practice with greater freedom; this was known as the School of the Great Assembly (*Mahasanghika*). Still other divisions formed; by the first century BCE some 20 could be named. One such group was the *Sarvastivada* ("all-is" doctrine) school which put its scriptures into Sanskrit and spread its teaching northward into Gandhara and Kashmir, thence into China and Tibet. This liberalizing tendency coalesced into the Mahayana (*maha* = great + *yana* = yoke, conveyance, vehicle) school which largely confined its literature to Sanskrit. Mahayanists derisively termed the core conservative branches of Buddhism "hinayana" or "lesser vehicle" because of their emphasis on personal salvation rather than on the salvation of all living beings. Among these early conservative groups, only Theravadan Buddhism survives today.

Here is a chart of the major difference between the two main divisions (adapted from "Buddhism" *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1964 edition):

	Theravadan	Mayahaya
Worship of the Buddha	Revere profoundly the personality of the historic Buddha and the Sangha he founded.	See Buddha as one of many Buddhas appearing in many universes, all manifesting one primordial Buddha nature.
The ideal Buddhist	Ideal Buddhist follows the Eightfold Path, the layman going as far as he is able, the monk striving further to fulfill the conditions for the Arahat whose goodness issues in metta toward all living beings.	Ideal Buddhist is a Boddhisatva (one vowed to become a Buddha) inspired by great compassion to work with the six virtues (<i>paramita</i>) of generosity, morality, patience, vigor, concentration (in meditation) and wisdom.
Salvation	Salvation is attained by one's own efforts; no one purifies another.	Salvation is attained also with the help of supermundane Buddhas and Boddhisattvas.
Faith	Faith (<i>saddha</i>) is confidence in the truth, taught by the Buddha and progressively realized oneself.	Faith (<i>sraddha</i>) is trust in the availability of merit transferred from some superhuman Buddha or Bodhisattva whom one worships with devotion and gratitude.

Sometime in the third century BCE missionaries brought conservative Pali Theravadan Buddhism to Ceylon, present-day Sri Lanka, under the evangelical sponsorship of Emperor Asoka (c. 274-232 BCE). It was there that Buddhist scriptures began to be written down for the first time; thus the oldest Buddhist writing is in Pali and is Theravadan. According to the *Mahavamsa* ("Great Chronicle") of Sri Lanka, the oral teachings were first committed to writing in the 6th century after the Buddha, or around 25 BCE. The importance of these earliest of Buddhist texts cannot be emphasized enough; in fact, the very survival of Buddhism in the past two thousand years owes a strong debt of gratitude to Sri Lanka, which has housed and nurtured the Dhamma arguably more than any other country.

Theravadan Buddhism strives to continue in the teaching style and philosophy of the Buddha; thus it can be considered the purest form of Buddhist practice. Buddha organized his followers into a disciplined community--the Sangha--in which the Bikkhus followed 227 precepts (listed in the *Vinaya*) and the laity took the five daily precepts or the eight lifetime precepts and diligently served the Sangha. Today, a senior monk presides over the monastery, or a high ranking elder monk (*maha thera*). Organized activities of the Bhikkus consist of observing discipline, study of Pali scriptures and commentaries, meditating, teaching novices and performing various services for the laity.

Lay followers in Theravada countries look to monks for instruction in the basic precepts for right living. These are given, honoring Buddha's "plain speaking" style, in Dhamma talks using simple colloquial language. Emphasis in Dhamma talks is given to the words of the Buddha and not to personal experience.

In Theravadan countries, devout followers maintain small shrines in their homes, go to preaching halls to hear doctrine, and go on pilgrimages to sacred sites in India, Sri Lanka, Burma or Thailand. With aid of monks, the people observe the tonsure ceremony when a child reaches puberty (this tradition is increasingly uncommon in Theravadan countries), attend his ordination ceremony when a young man of the family enters the order (this is often done for one to three months to instill discipline in a young man), and turn to the monastics to perform death rites. The chief religious festival is Vesak on the first full moon in May that celebrates Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and passing. Another is Kathina, the offering of robes and alms to the monks at the end of the rainy season, in October. Also especially popular in Theravadan countries is the new year's festival with its processions, water throwing and homage to the Buddha.

Today Theravadan Buddhism is found among the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Chittagong (East Bengal, in Pakistan)--and in scattered Sanghas in Europe and the Americas. Theravadan Buddhism once was found over a much larger area in Southeast Asia.

Lesson Four Review Questions:

1. What other Buddhist traditions have you experienced?
2. How were these traditions similar to Theravadan practice?
3. How were they different?
4. What attracts you the most to Theravadan practice?
5. In what ways is Theravadan practice the most conservative of the practices of Buddhism?

Lesson Five: *Samatha* (Concentration) Meditation-Part 1

In the quest for enlightenment, the Buddha developed two inter-related systems of meditation which enabled him to awaken to the Four Noble Truths, in order to be released from suffering. One system is called the development of serenity or tranquillity (*samathabhavana*) and the other is called the cultivation of insight (*vipassanabhavana*).

The practice of samatha meditation--also called *samadhi* meditation-- produces a calm, concentrated, unified mind characterized by inner peace. This stable inner tranquillity and clarity is then used as a platform from which insights and wisdom arise through cultivating *vipassana* meditation, also called insight meditation.

The main quality or feature of *samathabhavana* is to become concentrated and undistracted. The *Visuddhimagga* says this about concentration: "It is the centering of consciousness and its concomitants evenly and rightly on a single object. Concentration has non-distractions as its characteristic. Its function is to eliminate distraction. It is manifested as non-wavering."

Serenity practice has the purpose of suppressing or tranquilizing the mental agitations which prevent and hinder the mind from becoming calm and peaceful. These psychic irritations are called the Five Hindrances (*pancanivarana*):

1. Sensual desire (*kamachanda*),
2. Ill-will (*byapada*),
3. Sloth and torpor (*thinamiddha*),
4. Restlessness and worry (*uddhaccakukkuca*),
5. Doubt (*vicikiccha*).

As long as these mental defilements are active, our progress in developing the necessary concentration, serenity and insight will not go very far in reducing our suffering.

There are three levels or stages in the practice or development of *samatha* or *samadhi* meditation:

1. The first level is preliminary concentration (*parikammamadamhi*) which arises as a result of the meditator's initial efforts to focus attention on the selected object;
2. The second stage is access or neighborhood concentration (*upacarasamadhi*) marked by the temporary suppression of the five hindrances and the arising of the *jhana* factors.
3. The third stage culminates in full or absorption concentration (*appanasamadhi* or *jhana*) which is the complete immersion of the mind in its object and the full maturation of the *jhana* factors.

The starting point, therefore, in the practice of samatha meditation is to select a single object on which to begin concentrating one's attention. The *Visuddhimagga*, the classical text of Theravada Buddhist meditation, lists a number of suitable objects or subjects which can be utilized to initially calm the mind and get concentrated. The two most popular subjects are mindfulness of breathing (*anapanasati*), and lovingfriendliness (*metta*). Apart from being an object on which to concentrate, mindfulness of breathing or watching the breath helps to overcome the hindrances of restlessness and worry. The development of lovingfriendliness helps to overcome the hindrances of ill-will.

There are specific techniques to help develop both of these beginning practices or concentration exercises which are best learned by a teacher or by further reading.

Lesson Five Review Questions:

1. What is the main function or purpose of *samathabhavana*?
2. Do you have difficulty concentrating in meditation? Why?
3. How do you deal with distractions in meditation?
4. Do you have any periods of calm in your meditation?
5. Where would you go to read more about Theravadan meditation techniques?

Lesson Five Sources:

- The Jhanas in Theravada Buddhist Meditation.* Mahathera Henepola Gunaratana. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1988. 351-353
- Mindfulness in Plain English.* Bhante Henepola Gunaratana. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1994.
- The Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification.* Translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society. Part II, Chapter III.

Lesson Six: Samatha Meditation-Part 2

As we learned in lesson five, the most important function of *samathabhavana* or calming/concentration is to suppress the five hindrances so that non-wavering mental serenity and clarity arises.

For the beginner, the most common repetitive task will be to return to the chosen primary object to re-establish attention under the near constant onslaught and distraction of the hindrances. During the course of meditation, skill in detecting and dealing with the Five Hindrances is essential:

1. Sense desire (*kamachanda*) is desire for pleasant sights, sounds, smells, tastes and bodily feelings. This occurs as thoughts and imaginings about them and ranges from subtle liking to strong craving and sexual lust.
2. Ill-will (*byapada*) is aversion towards persons and disagreeable sense objects ranging from mild irritations and annoyance to overpowering anger and hatred.
3. Sloth and torpor (*thinamiddha*) refers to physical heaviness and mental dullness or sleepiness which often arises in beginning meditators. Overeating can be a cause of this as well.
4. Restlessness and worry (*uddhaccakukkuca*) is mental excitement, agitation, guilt, worry or remorse, fidgeting about in meditation, looking at the time, not being able to relax.
5. Skeptical doubt (*vicikicca*) is having uncertainty and wavering mind with regards to the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha and the training; doubts as to whether one will be able to make progress; doubts about whether all the work worth the effort; and so on.

You are highly encouraged to read more about the hindrances and especially the specific antidotes to them which can be employed during meditation and in daily life to help save you much time and frustration in your development of *samathabhavana*. Excellent sources would be Bhante Gunaratana's *Mindfulness in Plain English* or *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*.

When, by the dint of patience, mindfulness, and right effort, the hindrances are suppressed, then five mental factors arise to establish a deeper level of concentrated calm called "access concentration" (*upacarasamadhi*). These are called the five "factors of absorption" (*jhananga*):

1. Applied thought (*vitakka*),
2. Sustained thought (*vicara*),
3. Rapture or joy (*piti*),
4. Happiness (*sukha*),
5. One-pointedness (*ekaggata*).

Each one opposes a particular hindrance to help keep it suppressed:

1. Applied thought (*vitakka*) opposes sloth and torpor (*thinamiddha*);
2. Sustained thought or investigation (*vicara*) overcomes doubt (*vicikicca*);
3. Rapture or joy (*piti*) inhibits ill-will (*byapada*);
4. Happiness (*sukha*) allays restlessness and worry (*uddhaccakukkuca*);
5. and concentrated one-pointedness (*ekaggata*) inhibits sense desire (*kamachanda*).

In "access concentration" the hindrances are just barely suppressed and the *jhana* factors are still of a weak strength. But sometimes a prick of light like a firefly or a morning star may be seen in the mind. This is a sign (*nimitta*) of emerging serenity. It usually does not last long in the beginning. The task now is to keep persevering in the same way until the *jhana* factors are strengthened; eventually one will attain complete absorption in the first *jhana*.

The Buddha describes this in an often repeated standard formula: "Quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind [the five hindrances] he enters and dwells in the first *jhana*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion." This is rightly called serenity, but it is only the first stage of true Samadhi (*sammasamadhi*).

Lesson Six Review Questions:

1. Can you recognize each of the hindrances more closely now?
2. How do you deal with them?
3. Which is the most common?
4. Is your concentration improving?

Lesson Seven: *Vipassana* (Insight) Meditation-Part 1

Lesson five stated that calming the mind through concentration or *samatha* (*samadhi*) practice was necessary in order to prepare the mind or create a stable platform for cultivating insight and wisdom through *Vipassana* meditation.

The word *vipassana* is a compound of *vi* meaning "to divide or separate" and *passana* which means "seeing." So the meaning and function of *vipassana* is to see the body/mind process broken down into its parts, to divide and separate the whole into its elemental factors. This kind of special penetrative wisdom is what is cultivated through the systematic practice of *vipassana* or insight meditation.

The pivotal purpose of this is to see the true nature of the body and mind as it really is (*yathabutanadassana*), not merely the way we have been taught to believe or assume it to be. Seeing things as they are brings forth the proper Understanding and wisdom by which ignorance and suffering is destroyed. It brings the realization of the Four Noble Truths. This Understanding has the characteristic of penetrating the individual essences or states (*sabhava*). The function of this Understanding is to abolish the darkness of delusion, which conceals the individual essences of states. Such Understanding is manifested as non-delusion. As the Buddha taught: "One who is concentrated knows and sees correctly."

Essentially, then, *vipassana* meditation is a process or inner journey into our own body and mind to directly observe and understand how the body and mind works on the subtle levels, how it ticks; we see the interconnection between the body, mind, senses and sense stimulation. We see the automatic conditioning and reactions of our body and mind with the world in and around us.

This deep, penetrative vision allows the understanding of suffering and the causes of suffering to be seen clearly. With practice, the sources of internal and external conflict, confusion, psychological and physical suffering are seen through, weakened and eventually transcended. Stable mental and physical well-being gradually evolves along with kindness and compassion towards oneself and all beings. Ultimately the practice of *vipassana* -- coupled with the other training of the Eightfold Path--lead to the stages of Enlightenment and Liberation from all suffering.

The heart of *Vipassana* meditation is penetrating the three characteristics of existence (*Tilakkhana*):

1. Impermanence (*annica*),
2. Suffering (*dukkha*),
3. No-self (*anatta*).

The Buddha expounded that these three characteristics are the nature of all conditioned phenomena including our own body and mind and the world.

The actual objects of *vipassana* are the Five Aggregates of Clinging (*pancuppadanakhanda*):

1. material form (*rupa*),
2. sensations or clinging (*vedana*),
3. perception (*sanna*),
4. volitional formations (*sankhara*),
5. and consciousness (*vinnana*).

The mechanics of the process is to tune the calm, concentrated attention into the moment-to-moment arising and passing away of sense stimulation through the six senses so that we come to the deepest understanding of Impermanence, Suffering, and No Self.

Vipassana is based on the Buddha's meditation instructions given in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness Discourse (*Satipatthana Sutta*). Mindfulness is the basic tool we use in the development of *vispassana*.

Lesson Seven Review Questions

1. What is the meaning of *vipassana*?
2. What is the function of Understanding?
3. How does *vipassana* lead to understanding?
4. *Vipassana* meditation is derived from what Buddhist *sutta*?
5. What are the five aggregates?

Lesson Seven Sources:

Majjhima Nikaya (The Middle Length Discourses). Sutta 10. Translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wisdom Publications.
Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification. Translated by Nanamoli Thera, Buddhist Publication Society. Part 3, chapter 14.

Lesson Eight: *Vipassana* (Insight) Meditation-Part II

As we've seen, the aim of vipassana meditation is to penetrate the veil of delusion (*moha*) or ignorance (*avijja*) in the mind by deeply seeing the three characteristics of life: Impermanence (*anicca*), Unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and No-self (*anatta*). This special vision gives rise to Wisdom (*panna*) which then cuts off and destroys the seeds of mental defilements (*kilesa*) which generate the thoughts and actions producing suffering.

Ideally, concentration/tranquillity to the strength of at least the first *jhana*, should be cultivated before switching over to developing *vipassana*. However, it is possible to begin insight meditation even before that. Mindfulness of breathing is the preliminary object of attention. If one has already used the breath as one's object of *samatha* practice, so much the better.

The *Satippatthana Sutta*, also known as the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness Discourse*, provides the framework or field of attention for guiding awareness onto the five aggregates. The initial level of insight contemplation also entails a certain amount of investigative analysis (*dhammavicaya*).

The first station of mindfulness is the physical body itself. Mindfulness of breathing gets the attention out of the external world, out of the past and future into the present moment of the subtle inner body. Investigation then breaks down the whole body into its various parts by means of the thirty-two part mental dissection and then further into the four element contemplation. The aim is to experience the body ultimately as just a mass of rapidly changing vibrations/sensations--thus one gains the feeling of a solid body disappearing. The insights of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta* arise, and the mind detaches from its clinging and self-identification with the body. What is perceived is "just is what it is"--nature doing its thing.

With the attention at this detached inner level, awareness can now shift attention to the second foundation of mindfulness, that of feelings (*vedanakhanda*). We see that bodily and mental feelings are experienced as being either pleasant, painful or neutral and are produced by sense contact with sights, sounds, smell, taste, touch, and mind objects. We understand that these feelings are conditioned ways of interpreting the sensory stimulation; we see how we have become programmed to like (regard as pleasurable) or dislike (regard as disagreeable) and react with attachment or aversion what are in fact just empty nervous system vibrations of various intensities. We see how they are also just *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* and detach the observing awareness from them, become equanimous to them.

While we are doing this, mental states (*citta*) and mind objects (thoughts, moods, emotions, mental qualities) also arise, and we contemplate them also in terms of being impermanent, conditioned, a source of suffering if we cling and identify with them, and as "not me," "not mine," "not myself." We detach the observing awareness from them, and cultivate equanimity (*upekkha*) towards them.

In the course of doing this our concentration and deep calm grows and the five aggregates of body and mind no longer (during the meditation period) cause us any great discomfort. And we gain a deeper understanding of the Four Noble Truths.

Eventually, with sustained practice, this *vispassana*/insight meditation leads to the four stages of Realization/ Enlightenment/ Liberation, the four *jhanas*.

Lesson Eight Review Questions

1. What is the aim of vipassana meditation?
2. How does observing the breath help in observing the Five Aggregates of clinging?
3. To a Buddhist, what are the three characteristics of life?
4. How does *vipassana* meditation help you to understand the Four Noble Truths?

Lesson Eight Sources:

Majjhima Nikaya (The Middle Length Discourses). Sutta 10. Translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wisdom Publications.

Lesson Nine: The First Noble Truth

(Life is Dukkha.)

The Four Noble Truths hold a prominent place within the Buddhist teaching for they are the very core of the teaching. The Buddha said that just as all footprints of the jungle are able to fit within the elephant's footprint, so too are all elements of the Buddha's teaching able to fall within the Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is suffering.
2. The cause of suffering is craving.
3. There is an end to suffering, *Nibbana*.
4. The path to the end of suffering is the Noble Eightfold path.

The first truth acts as the foundation for the other three. That is, if life happened to contain no suffering, sadness, lamentation, grief or despair, then what would be the purpose of trying to find an end to these miseries? However, that life contains at least some suffering is self-evident. Our own experience shows us that sometimes a body may experience sickness, pain or discomfort. On a psychological level, a person might yearn for something that has not yet been obtained or accomplished, or feel sorrow for the loss of something that was cherished. Other translations for the First Noble Truth (which, in its original form, is the Pali word *Dukkha*, which commonly translates as "Suffering") are "Dissatisfaction," "Unsatisfactoriness," and "Life is inherently problematic."

While it is not difficult to see that life has *some* suffering, the first Noble Truth may nevertheless appear as an overly stark, and even pessimistic statement, to indicate that life is suffering. Why such emphasis on this rather gloomy nature of existence? Did the Buddha wish to depress us?

First, the Buddha did not wish to depress us. The promise of the Buddha's teaching is freedom from all suffering, not just some. Further, the Buddha stated that Nibanna, the final stage of enlightenment, is the highest form of happiness a person may experience. These statements are very encouraging and indicate that the Buddha is not at all a pessimist.

Rather the Buddha is a realist. Imagine that you are walking by a house and see that it is on fire. You call to the people in the house, "Come look—your house is on fire!" Imagine if the residents replied, "How pessimistic—why should we look at such a negative thing? We are fine right now so let us not look." The Buddha does not encourage this sort of turning away, but rather encourages us to look. Is life really suffering, through and through? Investigate for yourself: Look for happiness in some form which avoids this unsatisfactoriness. Now you ask yourself if you were you able to find it? This is the proper Buddhist mindset—to investigate the Four Noble Truths and gain wisdom by virtue of this investigation.

The Buddha's goal in teaching "*Dukkha*" is to represent a realistic view of the situation we are in. Imagine a circumstance in which nothing can be done which is ever totally satisfying. Rather, there is always some flaw to the experience, some elusive missing element which is just around the corner or otherwise just out of reach. The Buddha's First Noble Truth identifies life as just such a circumstance.

Even when we have reached a goal we have set, and have grasped a rare and precious Top Prize, the impermanence of life is there simultaneously. What was accomplished soon becomes a memory. That which was obtained must now be protected. The work of protection is stressful; the possibility of loss is even worse than the stress. No scenario mentioned is totally satisfying, none a true refuge. That which rises, falls; that which falls, rises.

The Buddha did not invent this situation--he merely reported it. Consider that whoever first discovered gold, did not invent gold. Similarly, the Buddha did not invent existence, but is rather commenting on it from the standpoint of a mind without anger, lust, clinging, craving or other impurities.

What is the effect on a student who properly digests the First Noble Truth? Indeed, it is to get free from the slippery slope, from the burning house. Free from suffering, free from unsatisfactoriness, free from the round of rebirths we are said to have been on since time immemorial.

Attaining *Nibanna*--the Unconditioned--is the goal of Buddhism. *Nibanna* represents the final freedom. To reach that goal, one must get on the path (the Noble Eightfold Path). Before getting on a path, one often desires to know why--why get on the path? Therein lies the practical purpose of the First Noble Truth: To motivate, and perhaps, in some cases, to jump-start, the spiritual journey. Indeed, the journey from suffering to liberation begins with an acknowledgement of suffering's existence in our lives.

Lesson Nine Review Questions:

1. What methods and paths have you taken to achieve happiness?
2. Looking back on past successes (i.e., from years ago), is your perception of them now the same as you had at the time of the success?
3. With regard to any current problems or dilemmas, what will the effect be of calming the mind and reducing clinging will regard to the problem/dilemma.
4. What comes to mind when you think of Renunciation?

Lesson Ten: The First Noble Truth (Part II)

(Life is Dukkha.)

The First Noble Truth, that “Life is Suffering” or “Life is inherently problematic,” may seem acceptable intellectually, but why does it sometimes not feel that way? We might look at a beautiful blue sky, or eat a tasty meal, or receive notice that we’ve come into a windfall of a million dollars, and reflect that life isn’t so bad after all. Doubts may begin to plague us about the Buddha calling for us to see life as suffering, where there is so much pleasure and joy to be found in the world. Here we have to take a bold and advanced look at life, making distinctions between what appears to be the case, and what is truly the case. In so doing, we may need to pull back on our perceptions—just like a telescope that zooms back to take in a wider field—in order to see a fuller picture of the situation we are in.

First, it should be said that pleasure does exist. Most certainly! There are things people do to gratify the senses of sight, sound, taste, smell and touch which are pleasurable. Even thinking about something can be pleasurable, which is why the Buddha’s teaching refers to the “Six-fold Sense Base” since our Mind shapes our experience as much, and even more so, than the other five senses. But in the final analysis, whether we experience pleasure, or whether we experience pain, and no matter what we experience, we exist in a context which is unsatisfactory.

Imagine for a moment that you are on a train that is heading at full speed straight into the side of a mountain. While you are on this train, you are not entirely sure when this impact will happen. Can you imagine the stress of this knowledge? Even if you sat in the dining car to have a pleasurable and tasty meal, it is at one and the same time pleasurable and suffering. The meal may be tasty, but the greater context spells suffering for yourself and all around you. Even if you receive notice that you’ve come into great wealth, what avail is it if you can not get off this doomed train? Realizing the situation, the one thing you would hold out as more valuable than anything else, is a way off the train!

Now consider your thoughts about others on the train who have blocked out, or ignored, that the train is heading for impact. Even if you tell them, or prove it to them, this still may not be something they wish to reflect on. From their perspective, your inability to thoroughly enjoy your meals and your wealth, are difficult to understand. You may appear like a pessimist in their eyes. Depending on how accurate you are about the train collision, it may be that you are a realist!

The impact of the train is death. Death has come to all we know—we ought not to imagine it will pass us by. The train itself represents just one of our existences in a countless number of lives (obviously, this incorporates the Buddha’s teaching of rebirth and past lives). How likely is it that you are going to die? How likely is it that someone you know is going to die? Let us take it as a certainty! Thus is the perspective of a Buddha, that we go through life after life, enjoying our little pleasures, but ultimately experiencing death and starting yet another life with the same dilemma.

The solution, the concept of “getting off the train,” is the attainment of Enlightenment. This has the highest of values. Enlightenment is attained by purifying the mind of greed, anger and delusion.

Is there anything in life we crave? If so, then that is greed and this urge to crave and cling to things and to experiences should be abandoned. Is there anything in life we have an aversion to, something we want to avoid at all costs? If so, that is another form of greed, and this, too, should be abandoned.

Is there anything in life which is existing and true, but which we turn a blind eye to and say that it doesn't exist and is not true? For example, we wish to ignore the simple truth that our lives will end in death, or we wish to ignore the fact that we are not in complete control of our own bodies or our destinies. Not wishing to acknowledge these simple truths about our lives is also the practice of delusion, or ignorance, and should be abandoned.

A note should be made that if “getting off the train” is presumed to mean suicide, that is not the intent. Suicide is the harming of one's self and, as such, is likely to generate negative *kamma* for the person and result in an unpleasant rebirth. What the Buddha teaches is not for people to run away from problems, but rather to resolve problems in a way that leads to a peaceful, simple life, such that the practice of spirituality leads to the purification of the mind, the attainment of Enlightenment, and the end of the round of rebirth.

Lesson Ten Review Questions:

- 1.) How often do you reflect on your own mortality (i.e., that you will pass away someday)?

- 2.) Do you see a connection between the Buddha's teaching on Karma, and how it relates to rebirth?

- 3.) What comes to mind when you imagine what your life would be like as an enlightened person (specifically, free of the three fetters: greed, anger and delusion)?

Lesson Eleven: The Second Noble Truth-Part I

(The root of dukkha is craving.)

And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of the arising of suffering? It is that craving (for the five aggregates) which leads back to continued rebirth and suffering along with the lure and the desire that lingers longingly now here, now there--namely the craving for sensual pleasure (*kamatanha*), the craving to exist forever (*bhavatanha*), and the craving for life to end (*vibhavatanha*)” (*Samyutta Nikaya, Nidanavagga*).

The Buddha has stated the second Noble Truth very bluntly--it is craving (*tanha*). He has defined craving in three categories:

- 1) The craving for sensual pleasures; craving for sights, sounds, smells, tastes, body sensations, and also for pleasurable thoughts, memories, etc.
- 2) The craving to exist forever as an individual ego entity due to clinging to the concept of self and eternity and not understanding *anatta*.
- 3) The craving for life to end is the view of nihilists and the wish of those contemplating suicide, not believing in rebirth or any after-life. Both these wrong views about self bring their own suffering.

The reason why craving is the source of suffering is that craving causes us to continually commit *kammic* unwholesome actions which bring their effects of pain and suffering down upon us individually and collectively. Blinded by the power of lust and desire, people live unwisely, violating the basic norms of morality, which include killing, lying, stealing, abusing and hurting others by sexual addiction, intoxicating the mind and by many other unskillful actions. All of which bring suffering to oneself and the others around us.

Where does craving come from and when did it first start? Craving and its counterpart, hatred, both stem from ignorance (*avijja*) and delusion (*moha*).

“Incalculable, monks, is the beginning of this faring on [in suffering]. The earliest point is not revealed of this faring on, the birth and death of beings cloaked in ignorance and tied by craving” (*Samyutta Nikaya, Mahavagga*).

Ignorance, Greed and Hatred are called the three poisons or the three unwholesome roots (*akusalamula*) which drive the cycle of perpetual wandering (*samsara*). Hatred derives from attachment/craving. When somebody or something threatens our happiness or security, aversion, anger, hatred arise as a resistance.

We have become stuck in seeking pleasures in the external world, seeing it as a source of happiness. We depend on sensual gratification to make believe we are happy and to mask over our inner incompleteness and pain.

It is from not understanding the three marks of conditioned existence, *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, that we falsely imagine this world of fleeting impermanence will somehow magically bring us happiness, and so we go on craving more and more, trapping ourselves more and more in the web of *kamma* and suffering

Lesson Eleven Review Questions:

1. Why is craving called the source of all suffering?
2. Where does craving come from; why do we keep on craving?
3. How does hatred come about?
4. What are the three unwholesome roots of *kamma*?

Lesson Eleven Sources:

Samyutta Nikaya, Mahavagga. The Great Chapter. 56:13.
Samyutta Nikaya, Nidanavagga. (Book of Causation). Chapter 4 and 15:9.

Lesson Twelve: The Second Noble Truth-Part II

(The root of dukkha is craving.)

The word *kamma* means volition. It is the conscious, intended actions a person does by the physical body, verbal speech and deliberate thought. The impressions or memory of this *kamma* become seeds that can generate similar actions in the future as well as attract painful or pleasant results. Actions motivated by greed, hatred and delusion bring painful consequences. This is the natural law of *kamma* as stated by the Buddha in the *Dhammapada*: "If one acts or speaks with an impure state of mind, then suffering will follow, as the cart wheel follows the foot of the ox."

A cornerstone of the Four Noble Truths, and essential to the second and third Noble Truths, is the Buddha's special teaching of Dependent Origination (*Paticcasumuppada*). It is a twelve-factor formula to illustrate how the process of *kamma* and suffering keeps regenerating itself, recycling as it were, over and over again in this lifetime and in an endless round of past and future lives. It shows how the process of rebirth from moment to moment determines our future destiny.

At death the powerful *kammic* energized force powered by ignorance and craving in a human being will remanifest in another existence and another body to carry on the process of life according to the accumulated *kammic* propensities (*sankhara*). These *sankhara* more or less create the womb from which we are born. Again in the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha proclaimed:

All beings are the owners of their *kamma*.
 They are heirs of their *kamma*;
kamma is the womb from which they spring....
 It's *kamma* which makes the world go round,
Kamma keeps moving on the lives of men.
 All beings to *kamma* are bound
 As a linchpin to the chariot wheel.

The formula of Dependent Origination, sometimes called Conditioned Genesis or Interdependent Co-arising, begins with Ignorance:

1. Dependent on ignorance arise volitional formation;
2. Dependent on volitional formations (*sankhara*) arises consciousness;
3. Dependent on consciousness arise name and form (the five aggregates of body and mind);
4. ...the six senses (the sixfold base);
5. ...contact;
6. ...feeling;
7. ...craving;
8. ... grasping (or clinging);
9. ...becoming;
10. ...birth;
11. Dependent on birth arises old age, sickness, pain, grief, suffering and death;
12. Thus there is the arising of the whole mass of suffering.

This is called "the forward sequence of the rounds of *samsara*" which generates untold suffering and countless rebirths in various realms of existence.

The Buddha declared: "Just as a stick thrown up in the air falls sometimes on one end sometimes on the other end, and sometimes on its side, even so do beings obstructed by ignorance, fettered by attachment and craving, go the rounds of birth and death in this world and other worlds...and the cemeteries have swelled."

Dependent Origination also applies to the moment-to-moment arising and passing away, birth and death of the mental process of consciousness, at each successive mind moment. This is birth and death at the deepest level, bringing with it suffering from moment to moment. And it all continues *ad infinitum*...until wisdom dawns.

Lesson Twelve Review Questions

1. What is *kamma*?
2. How does *kamma* generate rebirth?
3. What is Dependent Origination?
4. What is "moment-to-moment birth and death"?

Lesson Twelve Sources:

Anguttara Anthology. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society. p. 12.
Anguttara Nikaya: Book of Tens. Number 21. Wheel series 208-211. Pali Text Society.

The Dhammapada. verse 1

Samyutta Nikaya, Nidanavagga. Chapter I.1; Chapter IV, 15.9.

The Sutta Nipata. Translated by H. Saddatissa; Number 61, p. 75.

LESSON THIRTEEN: THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH

(There is an end to suffering, Nibbana.)

The third noble truth is the putting down of the burden. It is the noble truth of *Nibbana* (*Nirvana* in Sanskrit). *Nibbana* is beyond words. Any effort to describe it in words therefore must fall short. The conditioned mind can only think in dualistic terms. When we realize *Nibbana*, we transcend all dualism. No thinking goes on, as thinking is an inherently dualistic process. We cannot understand what is beyond the conditioned mind with the conditioned mind. To realize *Nibbana* is to have a transcendent experience, one that transcends what we thought was ourselves. *Nibbana* cannot be described directly since it transcends all conceptual categories.

Still, the Pali canon does give us some indicators. *Nibbana* is the cessation of suffering; the Pali word *Nibbana* means "to extinguish." A misconception people have is that they are going to be extinguished. What is extinguished is greed, hatred and delusion. There is no extinction of a self because it was not there to begin with, according to the Buddhist concept of *anatta*. One who has fully realized *Nibbana* no longer sees the impermanent as permanent; he or she no longer identifies with that which is born and dies.

The Buddha made it clear that *Nibbana* is not nothingness. Another way to describe *Nibbana* is the removal of the obscurations (obstructions) to truth, in the same way if you remove the clouds, you are left with the sun that was always there. Some have called it the "isness" of life; it is that which is, without any form of solidification.

Notice the difference, for example, between when you are lost in anger, caught in it, versus when you open up to it and observe it. Notice the moment when you are no longer identified with anger, notice the freedom in the mind in that moment. You are being let out of the prison of attachment and identification with the experience, the prison of "self." That is a taste of *Nibbana*.

The Buddha said there is no higher happiness than peace. To realize *Nibbana* is to realize the ultimate peace.

Without the third noble truth, without *Nibbana* or the unconditioned, we would be stuck. There would be no way out of the world of conditions, or way off the wheel of *samsara*. A common report of those who realize their first taste of *Nibbana* is a tremendous sense of relief. Often for the first time, meditators see how much suffering is involved in holding on to a self.

Ajahn Mun was thought to be an *arahant* (enlightened being). He was Thai and lived from 1870-1949. One of his disciples, Ajahn Maha Boowa, a famous Thai teacher in his own right, is still alive. Ajahn Chah spent a short amount of time with Ajahn Mun. Ajahn Mun was a very fierce teacher and that fierceness shows in his photographs. It was said that he had many spiritual powers and could talk to beings in other levels of existence. When he became fully liberated, he wrote a ballad called the "Ballad of Liberation." Here is a passage from that ballad:

When the heart sees its own decaying, or emptiness of phenomena, it is released from darkness. It loses its taste for them and abandons its doubts. It stops searching for things within and without. Its attachments all fall away. It leaves its loves and hates, whatever weighs it down. It can end its desires, its sorrows all vanish together with the weighty cares that made it moan, as if a shower of rain would refresh the heart. The cool heart is realized by the heart itself. The heart is cool for it has no need to wander around looking for people to try to satisfy its desires. Knowing the mind source in the present, it is unshakable and unconcerned with any good or evil, for they must pass away with all other impediments, perfectly still, the mind source neither thinks nor interprets, it stays only with its own affairs, no expectations, no need to be entangled or troubled, no need to keep up its guard. Sitting or lying down, one thinks at the source mind: "released." (Ajahn Mun, "Ballad of Liberation")

The Buddha often described *Nibbana* by saying what it was not, calling in the unconditioned, the unborn, the unformed. But he also described it in positive terms: *Nibbana* is visible in this life, inviting, attractive, accessible to the wise disciple. This *Nibbana* is the peace, the highest, the end of craving, the turning away from desire.

Lesson Thirteen Review Questions:

1. How many Buddhists does it take to change a light bulb?
2. Can nirvana be described in words? Why or why not?
3. What do meditators who have tasted nirvana often report?
3. What ends when *Nibbana* is fully realized?
4. What is the highest happiness?
5. Why is the Third Noble Truth vital?

Lesson Fourteen: The Third Noble Truth-Part II

(There is an end to suffering, Nibbana.)

The Buddha outlined the gradual attainment of *Nibbana* with the eradication of the Ten Fetters (*samyojana*). Ignorance, greed and hatred are subdivided first into these five fetters:

- 1) personality view (*sakkayaditthi*),
- 2) skeptical doubt (*vicikicca*),
- 3) attachment to rites and rituals (*silabbata-paramasa*),
- 4) sensual desire (*kama-raga*),
- 5) ill-will (*patigha*).

These five are the lower fetters which are the strongest links in the chain binding the mind to *samsara*. They are the roots from which the Five Hindrances arise and prevent the development of concentration and wisdom.

The following are called the higher fetters. They are more subtle in their manifestation and are the last ones to be destroyed before full liberation and Enlightenment is realized:

- 6) desire for subtle material form (*rupa-raga*),
- 7) desire for immaterial (heavenly) manifestation (*arupa-raga*),
- 8) conceit (*mana*),
- 9) restlessness (*uddhacca*),
- 10) ignorance (*avijja*).

The Buddha described four progressive stages in the eradication of these ten fetters culminating in the realization of Arahantship and the complete destruction of craving/suffering.

When, by perseverance in cultivating the Eightfold Path, one succeeds in eliminating the first three of the lower fetters, one realizes the first stage of Entering the Stream (*sotapatti*). The stream refers to the natural inclination at this point for the mind to keep inclining in the direction of liberating wisdom and increasing freedom from suffering, the stream that flows on down towards the ocean of *Nibbana*. This first stage is the most difficult because it requires a tremendous initial effort to burst through the self-delusion which goes against the stream of normal thought conditioning. The mind at this point will be assured of destroying the remaining seven fetters, at the most, within seven more lifetimes. However, full Enlightenment could occur before the end of that present life if sustained effort on the Eightfold Path were maintained.

The second stage of Once Returning (*sakadagami*) is realized when sensual desire and ill-will are significantly reduced so that there would be only subtle residual traces left in the unconscious. It is called Once Returning because the mind would have at the very most momentum for only one more birth before attaining final *Nibbana*. When all traces of sense desire and aversion are destroyed the mind realizes the third state of Never Returning (*anagami*). Upon death the mind of the Never Returner would manifest in one of the highest heavenly realms and from there attain final *Nibbana* without coming back to any rebirth.

When the five higher fetters are completely destroyed, the mind realizes the full liberation of suffering which is called *Arahatship*, perfect Sainthood. The *Arahat* would continue to live in the body and function normally until the natural lifespan is reached. But the mind of the *Arahat* no longer produces any kind of *kamma* which would be fuel for further becoming. As the Buddha put it: "Birth is destroyed, lived is the holy life, done is what was to be done, there is now no more becoming."

This is Supreme *Nibbana*, the end of suffering.

Lesson Fourteen Review Questions:

1. How many fetters are there, and what are they?
2. What is Entering the Stream?
3. Why is the second stage of Enlightenment called Once Returning?
4. How many more lifetimes will the Arahat be reborn?

Lesson Fourteen Sources:

Digha Nikaya. Trans. Maurice Walsh. Wisdom Publications. *Sutta 2*.

Samannaphala Sutta.

Lesson Fifteen: Right Understanding-Part 1

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the first aspect of that path.)

Bhikkhus, just as the dawn is the forerunner and first indication of the rising of the sun, so is right understanding the forerunner and first indication of wholesome states.

(Anguttara Nikaya 10:121)

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Noble Truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkhanirodha-gaaminīyā Patipadāya ñānānam*). This is the middle path that the Buddha discovered, avoiding the extremes of indulgence in sense pleasures and self-mortification. The conclusion of the Four Noble Truths leads naturally into the investigation of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The first aspect of that path, Right Understanding, is the proper and full understanding of the Four Noble Truths themselves. Before discussing the first aspect of this path, Right Understanding, it is helpful to understand the structure of the eightfold division and how it can be divided into three parts.

The first group is called the wisdom group (*pañya*). It consists of Right Understanding and Right Intention. Although the perfection of wisdom is the final goal of the Buddha's teaching, it is necessary to start the path with some degree of wisdom and understanding to build a firm foundation for the subsequent aspects of the path.

The second group is the morality division (*sīla*) consisting of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. These three form the groundwork for the third division to develop, that of concentration (*samādhi*): Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. It is then through the development of all these that the full perfection of Right Understanding can be reached, and thus final liberation.

The Buddha also taught a second eightfold path, that is the path of wrong understanding, wrong intention, wrong speech, etc. It is the initial aspect of Right Understanding that allows one to distinguish between the two. The Buddha explains this at length in the *Mahaaccattāriisaka Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 117)*. He also explains that within the Noble Eightfold path there are two kinds of Right Understanding, Right Intention, etc. The first kind is mundane in nature and, while it leads to rebirth in a favourable destination, it does not liberate one from the cycle of rebirth. The second kind is of a higher nature leading to liberation.

Right Understanding is also part of a category within the Noble Eightfold path known as the three cardinal points. This consists of understanding, effort, and mindfulness. In order to develop and perfect any one of the aspects of the path, these three factors will need to be applied.

The Pali word for Right Understanding is *sammadithi* and could more literally be translated as "right view." This translation is not uncommon. In English, however, the term "view" is often associated with "opinion" or "belief." There is a fundamental difference according to Buddhist thought. By cultivating Right Understanding, one is not seeking merely to change one's opinions about the workings of the world. Rather one tries to gradually see directly into the nature of reality at its most basic level—that is the mechanism of dependent origination and the Four Noble Truths. *Samma* is also sometimes translated as "skillful," emphasizing that these are qualities to be developed and trained in.

As we see in the *Mahaacattaariisaka Sutta*, Right Understanding comes first in the development of the path. In his book, *The Noble Eightfold Path*, Bhikkhu Bodhi gives the simile of a traveller going on a long, unfamiliar journey who will need to have a map, or talk to others who have gone before. Without these instructions, the traveller is likely to end up somewhere quite different than the place intended. Likewise, when one proceeds on the path with right understanding, it will be easy to move in the right direction.

Lesson Fifteen Review Questions:

1. What is the threefold grouping of the Noble Eightfold Path?
2. Which translation of *Sammadithi* do you prefer, and why?
3. What is the higher form of Right View explained in the *Mahaacattaariisaka Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 117)*?
4. What are the three cardinal factors and how could they be applied to different aspects of the path?

Lesson Fifteen Sources:

Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness. Bhante Gunaratana. Wisdom Publications.

The Noble Eightfold Path. Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Wheel Publication #308/311. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1994.

Majjhima Nikaya. Translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wisdom Publications.

Lesson Sixteen: Right Understanding--Part 2

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the first aspect of that path.)

In its truest sense, Right Understanding refers to the understanding of the Four Noble Truths. In practice, however, it can be said to have two forms. The first is the understanding and conviction in the law of *Kamma* (*karma*, Sanskrit). The second is the understanding of the Four Noble Truths, both on a mundane and supramundain level.

Often it is said that the Buddha taught that one should only believe that which can be proven for ones self. If one cannot experience it directly, then one should not believe it. This is a serious misrepresentation of the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha taught that the human mind has the potential for seeing the truth directly, and that one must develop ones mind to achieve that. One must first, through a gradual training, develop this capacity through the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. Only then can one see directly these aspects of truth that are not immediately accessible.

This is perhaps nowhere more relevant than with the law of kamma. Many westerners refuse to believe in the law of kamma because they cannot prove it for themselves. But yet, the Buddha taught that this was a fundamental starting point for his followers' practice.

The *Kaalaama Sutta* (AN 3:65) is often used to justify only believing in that which can be directly proven by oneself. In fact, at the end of the *sutta*, the Buddha gives what are known as the Four Solaces. In summary, he says that whether there is rebirth and consequences of actions or not, one is better off acting as if there were. For that reason, it is necessary at the very least to behave in a manner in which one would have no regrets if the law of *Kamma* were true.

The second form Right Understanding takes is that of understanding the Four Noble Truths and all of its subsequent forms: dependent origination, the five aggregates, the three characteristics, etc. This happens on two levels, mundane and supramundain.

Mundane Right Understanding (*saccaanuloomika sammaadi.t.thi*) is directly knowable by all who seek to understand the Buddha's teaching. It is developed by learning about the Four Noble Truths and other aspects of the Dhamma. As one learns, one develops confidence in what one can experience directly, and one develops faith that those aspects that are not directly perceptible will be seen in the future. This type of understanding, along with the belief in the law of kamma, compels the follower to bring his or her life and actions more in line with the Buddha's path to liberation. As explained in the previous lesson, this understanding leads directly to the development of the morality aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path.

One can see on a practical level that one's understanding of the Dhamma must be developed to a certain extent before progress can be achieved at even a beginning level. If people believe that their suffering is caused only by the world around them, they have not understood the First Noble Truth at even the most basic level. One would then not be inclined to develop the mind to reduce craving and clinging. There would only be the desire to change external circumstances. However, once a person understands that his or her suffering is caused by habit patterns in his or her own mind, then there will be a desire to seek a way to be free from this craving and clinging.

The moment you enter the Stream Entry path by destroying one of the three fetters--skeptical doubt, attachment to rules and rituals, and belief in the notion of a permanent self--you enter the Supramundane Right Understanding (*saccapa.tivedha sammaadi.t.thi*). This is the understanding that can only be gained through the development of the mind through meditation. It is at this level that the Four Noble Truths have been completely understood at the deepest and most personal level.

Lesson Sixteen Review Questions:

1. What are the different kinds of Right Understanding?
2. Why is Right Understanding both the beginning and end of the path?
3. What are your thoughts on rebirth?

Lesson Sixteen Sources:

Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness. Bhante Gunaratana. Wisdom Publications.

Majjhima Nikaya. Translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wisdom Publications.

The Noble Eightfold Path. Bhikkhu Bodhi. The Wheel Publication #308/311. Kandy, Sri Lanka, Buddhist Publication Society, 1994.

Lesson Seventeen: Right Intention-Part I

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the second aspect of that path.)

The second step on the Path is variously called Right Intention, Right Thought, Right Resolve, or Skillful Thinking (*Samma Sankappo*). Both this step and Right Understanding, step one, comprise the wisdom section of the Noble Eightfold Path and are of critical importance in counteracting the three great poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance.

Right View corrects the element of ignorance. Right Intention helps overcome greed and hatred. Thus, taken together, the first two steps of the Path are antidotes to these poisons that cause so much suffering and pain both on an individual level and on a societal level.

Right Intention has three elements: renunciation (*nekkhamma-sankappo*), loving-friendliness (*avyapada-sankappo*) and compassion (*avihimsa-sankappo*). We are enjoined to actively cultivate these three. This second step differs from the first by requiring more of a commitment to action; whereas step one, in contrast, calls for reflection.. Right Intention recalls another strong action step, Right Effort.

This lesson will discuss renunciation; the next lesson will deal with loving-friendliness and compassion.

Renunciation is an antidote to greed and craving. It is well to reflect on where greed leads us. Greed can never be satisfied; it only breeds more of kind, never leading to peace and happiness: “The demands of desire seem endless, and each desire demands the eternal; it wants the things we get to last forever. But all the objects of desire are impermanent” (Bk. Bodhi). Renunciation is the way to release from the suffering craving imposes.

While lay persons are not called upon to renounce to the degree that monastics are, there are skillful means to lessen our attachments. We really don't need most of the material things we crave. How many of you have an unused bread baking machine, a pasta maker, a crock pot-- you name it-- sitting in your attic; things you absolutely had to have at one time and would not be happy without. Well? *Mea culpa*.

“Letting go is the opposite of desire or attachment...along the Buddha's path we have the opportunity to give away or let go of everything that holds us back from our goal of the highest happiness—possessions, people, beliefs...even our attachment to our own mind and body” (Bhante Gunaratana). A bit daunting a proposition for lay people. However, “most people can let go in the midst of busy family-centered lives. What we need to reject is not the things we have or our family and friends, but rather our mistaken sense that these are our possessions.” (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

“Breaking free from domination by desire may not be easy, but the difficulty does not abrogate the necessity. Since craving is the origin of dukkha, putting an end to dukkha depends on eliminating craving, and that involves directing the mind to renunciation” (*The Noble Eightfold Path*).

“Real renunciation is not a matter of compelling ourselves to give up things still inwardly cherished, but of changing our perspective on them so they no longer bind us” (*The Noble Eightfold Path*).

A very practical form of lay renunciation is the practice of generosity (*dana*); by giving of our material possessions to the monastic community we renounce their personal use.

Moreover, “we do not need great wealth to practice generosity. All we need is the willingness to give of ourselves, even in some small way. With that thought we can, for example spend time with people, helping them to overcome their loneliness...Such sharing excels all other gifts” (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

Lesson Seventeen Review Questions:

1. What attachments can you renounce?
2. Discuss the slogan “he who dies with the most toys wins” from a Buddhist perspective.
3. In what ways are you currently practicing generosity?

Lesson Seventeen Sources:

Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness. Bhante Henepola Gunaratana. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001.

The Noble Eightfold Path. Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wheel Publication No. 308/311. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1994.

Lesson Eighteen: Right Intention-Part II

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the second aspect of that path.)

“Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world.
By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased.
This is a Law Eternal.”

—The *Dhammapada*.

This lesson will deal with the remaining two skillful thoughts: loving-friendliness (*metta*) and compassion (*karuna*), the antidotes to all the aversive poisons.

Loving-friendliness, also known as loving-kindness, is the second skillful thought. It is an antidote to ill will or malice. The practice of *metta* must be actively cultivated, for we all are filled with thoughts of ill will and malice--this is the human condition--and it requires effort, continual, to overcome these defilements. As Bhikkhu Bodhi explains in *The Noble Eightfold Path*, the practice of *metta* is facilitated by *metta-bhavana*, the meditation on loving-friendliness:

The meditation begins with the development of lovingkindness towards oneself. It is suggested that one take oneself as the first object of *metta* because true lovingkindness for others only becomes possible when one is able to feel genuine lovingkindness for oneself. Probably most of the anger and hostility we direct to others springs from negative attitudes we hold towards ourselves. When *metta* is directed inwards towards oneself, it helps to melt down the hardened crust created by these negative attitudes, permitting a fluid diffusion of kindness and sympathy outwards...

Once one has learned to kindle the feeling of *metta* towards oneself, the next step is to extend it to others. The extension of *metta* hinges on a shift in the sense of identity, on expanding the sense of identity beyond its ordinary confines and learning to identify with others. The shift is purely psychological in method, entirely free from theological and metaphysical postulates, such as that of universal self immanent in all beings. Instead, it proceeds from a simple straightforward course of reflection which enables us to share the subjectivity of others and experience the world (at least imaginatively) from the standpoint of their own inwardness... If we look into our own mind, we find that the basic urge of our being is the wish to be happy and free from suffering. Now, as soon as we see this in ourselves, we can immediately understand that all living beings share the same basic wish. All want to be well, happy, and secure.

Think of a world in which *metta* was universally practiced!

Loving-friendliness is directed to everyone, no exceptions. This may seem hard to do especially towards our enemies, but consider what Venerable Bhante Gunaratana has to say in *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*:

There is no such person as an enemy. It is the person's negative state of mind that is causing us problems. Mindfulness shows us that states of mind are not permanent. They are temporary, correctable, adjustable...In practical terms, the best thing I can do to assure my own peace and happiness is to help my enemies overcome their problems. If all my enemies were free of pain, dissatisfaction, affliction, neurosis, paranoia, tension, and anxiety, they would no longer have reason to be my enemies...[they would be] just like anybody else—wonderful human beings.

Compassion, *karuna*, is the third skillful thought. It is antidote to hatred and cruelty. Compassion requires an object; it is centered on the individual toward whom it is expressed. Suffering is our shared lot; it is crucially important to fully understand this. We suffer; all other beings suffer; this is the First Noble Truth. Compassion acknowledges this and, when cultivated, blunts thoughts of doing harm by word or action to any other being. It is easy to hurt others who have hurt us or who threaten to hurt us. We must understand that their action arises from their own deep suffering. To respond in kind is only to perpetuate this suffering. Here is another important passage about *metta* and *karuna* from *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness* by the Venerable Bhante Gunaratana:

Compassion and loving-friendliness are mutually supportive. When you are full of loving-friendliness, your heart is open and your mind is clear enough to see the suffering of others.” As with loving-friendliness, “it is impossible to practice genuine compassion for others without the foundation of self-compassion. If we try to act compassionately out of sense of personal unworthiness or the belief that others are more important than we are, the true source of our actions is *aversion for ourselves*, not compassion for others....

No one is uniquely bad. Everyone in the world has the same problems. Greed, anger, jealousy, pride, bad days, disappointment, and impatience come to all unenlightened beings. When we make a habit of meeting the mind's many changes with compassion, the mind can relax. Then, we can see more clearly, and we continue to grow in understanding.

Lesson Eighteen Review Questions:

1. Consider the implications of loving-friendliness and compassion for world peace. Do you think this is “pie in sky” or not?
2. How can you use loving-kindness and compassion in the work place? How about your boss and co-workers? Do you think it will work?
3. Why are we attached to hating?

Lesson Eighteen Sources:

Dhammapada. Trans. Venerable S. A. Buddhakkhita. Maha Bodhi Society.
Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness. Ven. Henepola Gunaratana. Boston: Wisdom, 2001.
The Noble Eightfold Path. Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wheel Publication No. 308/311. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1994.

Lesson Nineteen: Right Speech-Part 1

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the third aspect of that path.)

“The test of Skillful Speech is to stop and ask yourself before you speak: “is it true? Is it kind? Is it beneficial? Does it harm anyone? Is this the right time to say anything?”

--Bhante Gunaratana

Right or Skillful Speech (*Samma Vaca*) is the third factor in the Eightfold Path. It is part of the *Sila* section which also includes Right or Skillful Action (*Samma Kammanto*) and Right or Skillful Livelihood (*Samma Ajivo*).

The Buddha divides right speech into four components:

1. Abstaining from false speech (*musavada veramani*),
2. Abstaining from malicious speech (*pisuna vaca veramani*),
3. Abstaining from harsh speech (*pharusa vaca veramani*), and
4. Abstaining from useless speech or idle chatter (*samphappalapa veramani*).

This lesson will address the first two components, and Lesson 2 will address the last two.

1. Abstaining from false speech: Right speech is one of the most challenging aspects of the Eightfold Path because of our conditioned and habitual behavioral patterns. Most of the time we do not speak mindfully. As Bhikkhu Bodhi explains in *The Noble Eightfold Path*, this can lead to causing suffering in others and within ourselves: "Speech can break lives, create enemies, and start wars, or it can give wisdom, heal divisions, and create peace."

The first quality of Right or Skillful Speech is to speak the truth and avoid false speech. The Buddha describes this in the *Saleyeyaka Sutta*:

When [someone is] questioned as a witness thus, "So good man, tell what you know": knowing, he says, "I know": not knowing, he says, "I do not know": not seeing, he says, "I do not see": or seeing, he says, "I see": he does not in full awareness speak falsehood for his own ends, or another's ends, or for some trifling worldly end. (*Majjhima Nikaya* 41)

Speaking truthfully includes not exaggerating or embellishing our speech. It would be helpful to consider our motive for doing this. Some people might feel that they will not be heard unless they exaggerate to make a story sound more dramatic. On the other hand, remaining silent at certain times could be a form of lying---if a response might be important to clarify a situation. One could be wrongly accused or required to speak out if someone is making derogatory or discriminatory remarks.

The Buddha counseled his son Rahula, a young novice, soon after he was ordained. One day the Buddha came to Rahula, pointed to a bowl with a little bit of water in it and asked: "Rahula, do you see this bit of water left in the bowl?"

Rahula answered: "Yes, sir."

"So little, Rahula," continued the Buddha, "is the spiritual achievement [*samannaa*, lit. 'recluseship'] of one who is not afraid to speak a deliberate lie."

Then the Buddha threw the water away, put the bowl down, and said: "Do you see, Rahula, how this bowl is now empty? In the same way one who has no shame in speaking lies is empty of spiritual achievement." Then the Buddha turned the bowl upside down and said: "Do you see Rahula, how this bowl has been turned upside down? In the same way one who tells a deliberate lie turns his spiritual achievements upside down and becomes incapable of progress." Therefore, the Buddha concluded, one should not speak a deliberate lie even in jest (*Maha Niddesa* 61).

2. The next component is abstaining from malicious speech (*pisuna vaca*) and abstaining from slanderous speech (*pisunaya vaca veramani*). About this the Buddha said:

He speaks maliciously; he repeats elsewhere what he has heard here in order to divide [those people] from these, or he repeats to these people what he has heard elsewhere in order to divide [these people] from those; thus he is one who divides those who are united, a creator of divisions, who enjoys discord, rejoices in discord, delights in discord, a speaker of words that creates discord. (*Majjhima Nikaya* 41).

We can speak about something that is true about a person yet if our intent is to cause someone harm it is malicious. We should examine our motives when we talk about another person in a negative way. Perhaps we are trying to establish a special connection with a friend by criticizing the other person. As the Venerable Bhante Gunaratana asserts in *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*, some people disguise their malicious speech pretending to be concerned about the person: "If your goal is to manipulate others or to earn someone's gratitude or appreciation, your speech is self-serving and malicious rather than virtuous."

The Buddha described the seriousness of slanderous speech: "He avoids slanderous speech and abstains from it. What he has heard here he does not repeat there, so as to cause dissension there; and what he has heard there he does not repeat here, so as to cause dissension here. Thus, he unites those who are divided; and those that are united he encourages. Concord gladdens him, he delights and rejoices in concord; and it is concord that spreads by his words. (*Anguttara Nikaya* 10:176)

Lesson Nineteen Review Questions:

1. Be mindful of your next conversation. Can you recognize elements of wrong speech?
2. Are you aware of speaking untruthfully?
3. Note when you are using malicious speech.

Lesson Nineteen Sources:

Anguttara Nikaya, or *Gradual Sayings*. Pali Text Society (PTS). Oxford, England.
Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness. Bhante Gunaratana. Wisdom Publications.
Majjhima Nikaya. Translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Pub.
The Noble Eightfold Path. Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Wheel Publication #308/311. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1994.

Lesson Twenty: Right Speech—Part 2

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the third aspect of that path.)

Right or Skillful Speech (*Samma Vaca*) is the third factor in the Noble Eightfold Path. It is part of the *Sila* section which also includes Right or Skillful Action (*Samma Kammanto*) and Right or Skillful Livelihood (*Samma Ajivo*).

The Buddha divides right speech into four components:

1. abstaining from false speech (*musavada veramani*),
2. abstaining from malicious speech (*pisuna vaca veramani*),
3. abstaining from harsh speech (*pharusa vaca veramani*),
4. abstaining from useless speech or idle chatter (*samphappalapa veramani*).

Lesson One spoke of abstaining from false speech and malicious speech. Lesson Two will address the third and fourth components: abstaining from harsh speech and abstaining from useless speech or idle chatter.

3. The third component is abstaining from harsh speech (*pharusa vaca veramani*). The Buddha spoke about this when he said: "He speaks harshly; he utters such words that are rough, hard, hurtful to others, offensive to others, bordering on anger, uncondusive to concentration" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 41) "Verbal abuse, profanity, sarcasm, hypocrisy, and excessively blunt or belittling criticism are all examples of harsh language," explains Bhante Gunaratana.

We need to be mindful of the effect of our words on another person. How many times have we spoken in anger and regretted our words as we perceived how we hurt the other person as well as ourselves.

Harsh speech can take many forms. One is abusive speech. An example of this is a parent criticizing a child constantly and never giving any positive feedback. Insult is another form of harsh speech. This includes pointing out some negative quality such as one appearing stupid, fat, unattractive and any comments which detract from one's dignity. Sarcasm and ridicule are often hidden in a comment of "Can't you take a joke?"

The Buddha asserts: "He avoids harsh language and abstains from it. He speaks such words as are gentle, soothing to the ear, loving, such words as go to the heart, and are courteous, friendly, and agreeable to many" (*Anguttara Nikaya* 10:176). This passage describes the antidote to harsh speech which is lovingfriendliness (*metta*). We need to be mindful of our speech and apologize if we have hurt a friend or family member. An usher at the door of a musical performance showed great wisdom when she commented that people are nicer if we are nice to them.

4. The last component is abstaining from useless chatter and idle speech, (*samphappalapa veramani*). The sound of the Pali word *samphappalapa* well describes this useless chatter. Gossip is included in this category. The Buddha spoke about this:

"He is a gossip; he speaks at the wrong time, speaks contrary to the *Dhamma* and the Discipline; at the wrong time he speaks such words that are worthless, unreasonable, immoderate, and unbeneficial" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 41).

"The fourth type of wrong speech is gossip, which the Buddha described as foolish or meaningless talk. When we say the word gossip in English, we may be referring to a whole range of negative speech, from malicious invective to merely careless or useless chatter. All such speech is considered wrong according to the Buddha's teaching" (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

Gossip is negative speech which often leads to distorted stories about a person who can easily be hurt in the process. The root of gossip is often aversion in the form of anger.

Does refraining from useless chatter mean that we shouldn't talk to our family and friends about events in our lives such as movies, clothes, children, grandchildren and political events? The Buddha advised the monks to only speak about the Dhamma. It is good for us to speak about the Dhamma, but part of experiencing lovingfriendliness with our friends and families is to share what is happening in our lives. It is important and helpful to share our joys and sorrows. Useless chatter is different from this in that it is pointless talk to fill time and is usually driven by anxiety and restlessness. As Bhante Gunaratana says, "Gossip and idle talk lead to quarrels and misunderstandings, waste your time, and create a confused state of mind."

Lesson Twenty Review Questions:

1. Note your harsh speech and the anger behind it.

2. Note your useless speech. What is causing your useless chatter?

Sources for Lessons Twenty through Thirty:

Anguttara Nikaya, or Gradual Sayings. Oxford, England: Pali Text Society.
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Lesson Twenty-one: Right Action-Part 1

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the fourth aspect of that path.)

Each action we consciously perform will leave a seed for potential reaction. This means that what you do will rebound to you in some form.

--Bhante Rahula

Right or Skillful Action (*Samma kammanto*) is the fourth factor of the Eightfold Path. It is part of the *Sila* (morality) section which also includes Right Speech (*Samma vaca*) and Right Livelihood (*Samma ajivo*).

The Buddha divides right action into three components: abstaining from taking life (*panatipata veramani*), abstaining from stealing (*adinnadana veramani*) and abstaining from sexual misconduct (*kamesu micchacara veramani*).

He states: "Therein, bhikkhus, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? One understands wrong action as wrong action and right action as right action: this is one's right view. And what, bhikkhus, is wrong action? Killing living beings, taking what is not given, and misconduct in sensual pleasures: this is wrong action. And what bhikkhus, is right action?...Abstinence from killing living beings, abstinence from taking what is not given, abstinence from misconduct in sensual pleasures" (*Majjhima Nikaya 117: 22,23, 25, Mahacattarisaka Sutta*).

Right action also involves avoiding false speech and using intoxicants, in other words, following the five precepts:

1. Abstaining from taking life (*panatipata veramani*) does not simply mean to refrain from killing other human beings but includes taking the life of insects and animals. Many people are bothered by ants, crickets and other bugs in their houses. One compassionate way to deal with this situation is to gently carry them to an outside location. One example of this is the Bhavana mice that inhabit the pantry. They are first caught in a harmless "Have a Heart Trap" and next driven several miles from Bhavana before being released.

The Buddha described killing as an act of purposely taking life. He set down rules for monks: 1) There must be a being; 2) You must know that there is a being; 3) You must intend to kill; 4) You must plan to use a method to kill the being; and 5) You must kill the being, using only the planned method.

One question frequently asked is, "Does eating meat fall into the category of taking life? Bhante Gunaratana answers this way: "Meat-eaters do not fulfill any of these conditions. They know that what they are eating is meat and that the meat came from some animal. Yet, they had no intention of killing the animal, nor did they participate in killing it."

2. The second part of right action is to abstain from taking what is not given (*adinnadana veramani*). "He avoids taking what is not given and abstains from it; what another person possesses of goods and chattel in the village or in the wood, that he does not take away with thievish intent" (*Anguttara Nikaya 10: 176*).

We might think that we are above stealing but we need to look at the subtle opportunities to take what is not given to us. Bhante Gunaratana describes: "Taking credit for someone else's ideas is also stealing. So is lifting small items from the office, such

as pens, notebooks, or computer disks, and taking them home from our personal use.

Often we justify such actions by telling ourselves, 'I could have thought of that idea myself'....Cheating on your income taxes, writing bad checks, taking bribes, and engaging in fraudulent business practices are also stealing."

Greed and hatred are usually the causes of our taking what is not given. We often delude ourselves when we practice some of the things that Bhante Gunaratana has described. The positive counterpart for stealing is honesty and having respect for the belongings and ideas of others.

3. Abstaining from sexual misconduct (*kamesu micchacara veramani*).

This precept is also about indulging and abusing any kind of the sense pleasures including food addiction, too much television, alcohol, etc. "Sexual misconduct includes rape, manipulating someone into having sex against their wishes, and sex with minors, animals, someone's spouse, or someone protected by parents or guardians; it also includes breaking trust in a relationship. A sexual relationship with your spouse or partner is not considered misconduct" (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

Many women and men carry the pain and scars from being raped or manipulated into having sex against their own wishes throughout their entire lives. One moment of passion can lead to suffering not only for the victim but also for family members as well. The problem with lust and sexual desire is that these can never be completely satisfied. It is like having poison ivy. We scratch and the result is a more intense irritation. There are subtle and not so subtle ways of behaving in a suggestive way. We need to be mindful about the way we dress and our body language when relating to others. What can help us to overcome lust and sexual misconduct? The Buddha offers this profound advice:

Of all the medicines in the world,
 Manifold and various,
 There is none like the medicine of Dhamma
 Therefore, O monks, drink of this.
 Having drunk this Dhamma medicine
 You will be ageless and beyond death
 Having developed and seen the truth,
 You will be quenched, free from craving.

(*Milindapanha* 334, trans. by Ven. S. Dhammika)

Lesson Twenty-one Review Questions:

1. Be mindful of your daily actions in terms of taking life.
2. Are there any ways in which you are taking what is not given?
3. Examine your relationship with others. Are there any subtle or not so subtle ways that you are engaging in sexual misconduct or abuse of sense pleasures?
4. If you answered yes to #3, what can you do to correct this behavior?

Lesson Twenty-two: Right Action-Part 2

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the fourth aspect of that path.)

Right or Skillful Action (*Samma kammanto*) has three components which were discussed in Lesson One: 1) abstaining from taking life (*panatipata veramani*), 2) abstaining from stealing (*adinnadana veramani*) and 3) abstaining from sexual misconduct (*kamesu micchacara veramani*). Right Action also includes avoiding false speech and using intoxicants, in other words, following the Five Precepts. This lesson will continue with the Third Precept, abstinence from misconduct in sensual pleasures, the Fourth Precept, avoiding false speech, and the Fifth Precept, use of intoxicants that cause heedlessness.

The Third Precept is abstaining from sexual misconduct (*kamesu micchacara veramani*). As the Venerable Bhante Gunaratana explains in *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*, "Sexual misconduct includes rape, manipulating someone into having sex against their wishes, and sex with minors, animals, someone's spouse, or someone protected by parents or guardians; it also includes breaking trust in a relationship. A sexual relationship with your spouse or partner is not considered misconduct."

Many women and men carry the pain and scars from being raped or manipulated into having sex against their own wishes throughout their entire lives. One moment of passion can lead to suffering not only for the victim but also for family members as well. The problem with lust and sexual desire is that these can never be completely satisfied. It is like having poison ivy. We scratch and the result is more intense sensations. Craving or desire is at the root of our rationalization about there being nothing wrong with casual sex. We need to look at how much this type of behavior hurts ourselves and others. Again the Venerable Bhante Gunaratana explains, "Sexual pleasures are so alluring, and their downsides--rejection, embarrassment, frustration, jealousy, insecurity, remorse, loneliness, and craving for more--are so unbearable that they keep people running on a treadmill.

There are subtle and not so subtle ways of behaving in a suggestive way. We need to be mindful about the way we dress and our body language when relating to others. What can help us to overcome lust and sexual misconduct? The Buddha offers this profound advice:

Of all the medicines in the world,
Manifold and various,
There is none like the medicine of Dhamma.
Therefore, O monks, drink of this.

Having drunk this Dhamma medicine,
You will be ageless and beyond death.
Having developed and seen the truth,
You will be quenched, free from craving. (*Dhammapada*)

However, the Third Precept is also about not indulging in or abusing any of the other sense pleasures including food addiction, too much television, alcohol, and so forth. An ad showing a beautiful young woman eating a candy bar with the words, “We specialize in craving,” is an example of this. We are constantly bombarded with ads on TV, signboards, newspapers, magazines that encourage us to satisfy our cravings and overindulge in sensual pleasures.

The Fourth Precept is abstaining from false speech. Another component of Right or Skillful Action is to be mindful of our speech. The Buddha teaches us to speak the truth and avoid false speech. This includes not exaggerating or embellishing our speech to impress others.

The Fifth Precept is abstaining from the use of intoxicants that cause heedlessness. Right or Skillful Action contains the precept to avoid alcohol, drugs and other intoxicants. The Buddha did not tell lay followers to avoid all in intoxicants, but only those that cause “negligence, infatuation, and heedlessness. Included in this category would be drugs prescribed by doctors for pain or an occasional glass of wine or beer. One problem with the latter is that one drink leads to another and one becomes less inhibited and less mindful. The number of people who attend AA, Al-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics, and NA is a testimonial to the pain and scars that many people carry after living with an addicted family member.

Bhante Gunaratana writes: “In what other ways do we drug ourselves, and why? Using this aspect of Skillful Action as a general guideline, question your motivations, as whether you are trying to avoid being mindful. What are your escapes? Reading a newspaper? Engaging in unnecessary chatter? Mindfulness can help you identify the tricks you use to avoid continuous awareness of reality.”

Lesson Twenty-two Review Questions

1. Examine your relationship with others. Are there any subtle or not so subtle ways that you are engaging in sexual misconduct or abuse of sense pleasures?
2. Notice the clarity of your mind before and after a glass of wine or beer.
3. Be mindful of speaking the truth.

Lesson Twenty-three: Right Livelihood-Part 1

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the fifth aspect of that path.)

Right or Skillful Livelihood (*Samma Ajiva*) is the fifth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. It is part of the *Sila* section which also includes Right or Skillful Speech (*Samma Vaca*) and Right or Skillful Action (*Samma Kamanto*).

Here is the Buddha discoursing in the *Majjhima Nikaya* about Right Livelihood:

Therein, Bhikkhus, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? One understands wrong livelihood as wrong livelihood and right livelihood as right livelihood: this is one's right view.

And what, Bhikkhus, is wrong livelihood? Scheming, talking, hinting, belittling, pursuing gain with gain: this is wrong livelihood....

And what, Bhikkhus, is right livelihood that is noble, taintless, supramundain, a factor of the path? The desisting from wrong livelihood, the abstaining, refraining, abstinence from it in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path...

One makes an effort to abandon wrong livelihood and to enter upon right livelihood: this is one's right effort... Thus these states run and circle around right livelihood, that is, right view, right effort, and right mindfulness. (117: 28-33)

Right Livelihood is about earning one's living in a way which does not interfere with our spiritual development. The Buddha lists five kinds of livelihood which bring harm to others: "These five trades, O monks, should not be taken up by a lay follower: trading with weapons, trading in living beings, trading in meat, trading in intoxicants, trading in poison" (*Anguttara Nikaya* 5:177).

In *The Noble Eightfold Path*, Bhikkhu Bodhi explains this further: "Obviously any occupation that requires violation of right speech and right action is a wrong form of livelihood, but other occupations such as selling weapons or intoxicants, may not violate those factors and yet be wrong because of their consequences for others."

An example of an individual involved in dealing with weapons is Bhante Sanghasena, a Buddhist monk from Ladakh, India. He was a devout Buddhist in his adolescent years but decided to join the Indian army. He was trained to shoot guns, detonate bombs and kill people. He soon realized that this behavior violated the Buddhist precepts. He left the military at age twenty-one to become a Theravadan Buddhist monk.

The Venerable Bhante Gunaratana suggests that we ask ourselves three questions when assessing Skillful or Right Livelihood: “First, is my job an inherently wrong occupation? That is, does it cause harm by definition? Does it involve manufacturing, buying, selling, promoting, or using guns or other weapons? Does it involve intoxicants or poisons? Does it entail harming or killing living beings? The Buddha himself mentioned that jobs involving weapons, poisons, or killing are definitely wrong livelihood.”

Bhante Gunaratana points out that jobs that fall into these categories include doing research and development of chemical and biological weapons, selling insecticides, designing computer guidance systems for missiles, working for a tabloid newspaper that harms the reputations of public figures, and working for radio talk shows that broadcasts hateful speech.

We need to look at our occupations to see if there is a way we are causing harm in an obvious or subtle way. Working as a bar tender clearly encourages people to cause harm to themselves and family members. People with addiction problems are often violent, out of control and cause endless suffering for loved ones. Even having one glass of wine or a beer can interfere with our mindfulness and lead us to use wrong speech and behave in inappropriate ways. In the same way, anyone involved in the manufacturing, selling, promoting alcohol is guilty of causing harm and suffering. Working for a casino or gambling establishment is wrong livelihood because it exploits people with addictive behavior.

The Venerable Bhante Gunaratana states: “Because our economic system has become so complex, sometimes the determination of what constitutes wrong livelihood is not so clear-cut. For instance, is working for the military always inherently wrong? It depends. If the job puts the person in a position to use weapons, including a computer to launch missiles, it is probably wrong livelihood. But being a medic or a cook might not be inherently wrong.”

We also might be working in a job that seems clearly to represent Right Livelihood, such as being a teacher, minister, therapist, or physician, but if we relate to clients, students, or patients with harsh speech, with ridicule, with unfair criticism, or without respect, then we are practicing wrong livelihood.

Lesson Twenty-three Reviews Questions:

- 1. Examine your job closely. Are there ways in which you are causing harm to yourself?**

- 2. Are you causing harm to others in your job?**

Lesson Twenty-four: Right Livelihood-Part 2

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the fifth aspect of that path.)

Right or Skillful Livelihood (*Samma Ajiva*), as described in Lesson Twenty-three, is about earning one's living in a way which does not interfere with spiritual development. The Buddha spoke of five kinds of livelihood which bring harm to others: dealing in weapons, dealing in living beings (meaning slavery), dealing in animal butchery, dealing in poisons, and dealing in intoxicants.

Lesson Twenty-three discussed the first of three questions that we need to ask ourselves when assessing Skillful or Right Livelihood. The first question is does my job cause harm? This lesson will address the second and third questions that the Buddha asked: does my job lead me to break the Five Moral Precepts and are there aspects of my job that disturb me and keep my mind from settling down?

We have already examined some ways in which jobs can cause us to break the precepts. Lesson Twenty-three described several ways that one can violate the First Precept, to abstain from taking life, such as serving in the military in a capacity of using weapons, or manufacturing, buying, selling, promoting or using guns and other weapons.

The Second Precept is to abstain from taking what is not given. The Buddha named several dishonest means of gaining wealth which fall under wrong livelihood: practicing deceit, treachery, soothsaying, trickery, and usury (*Majjhima Nikaya* 117). White collar crime falls under these categories. A good example are publicized efforts to crackdown on insider traders, on tax evaders, and on other white collar crooks who through their greed have caused many innocent people to lose their life savings. A wealthy airline executive recently arranged to give himself a big raise at a time when the airline was threatened with bankruptcy.

The Third Precept is to abstain from sexual misconduct. An example of this is sexual harassment on the job. If a person with a job which falls under the category of Right Livelihood exploits fellow employees, relating to them in a sexual way or disrespectful way, this becomes wrong livelihood.

The Fourth Precept is to abstain from false speech. It is obvious that any occupation that requires violation of right speech is wrong livelihood.

In *The Noble Eightfold Path*, Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi talks about Right Livelihood under three headings:

- 1) rightness regarding actions,
- 2) rightness regarding persons,
- 3) and rightness regarding objects.

Rightness regarding actions means that workers should fulfill their duties diligently and conscientiously, not idling away time, not claiming to have worked longer hours than they did or pocketing the company's goods. "Rightness regarding persons" means that due respect and consideration should be shown to employers, employees, colleagues, and customers. An employer, for example, should assign his workers chores according to their ability, pay them adequately, promote them when they deserve a promotion and give them occasional vacations and bonuses. Colleagues should try to cooperate rather than compete, while merchants should be equitable in their dealings with their customers. "Rightness regarding objects" means that in business transactions and sales the articles to be sold should be presented truthfully. There should be no deceptive advertising, misrepresentations of quality or quantity, or dishonest maneuvers. (*Noble Eightfold Path*)

Finally, the Venerable Bhante Gunaratana admonishes us to ask ourselves if there are any aspects of our own jobs that disturb us and keep our minds from settling down? (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*). Our jobs may pass the first two levels of inquiry, but there might be other factors getting in the way of our spiritual progress. One example is becoming exhausted by working too many hours and ignoring family responsibilities. We may be stressed by the disrespectful way that certain administrative people are treating the employees. No job is perfect. We often need to use metta or loving-friendliness when dealing with difficult people.

"In your meditation period, take time to use the three-tiered inquiry to assess to what extent your current job situation constitutes Skillful Livelihood. You may decide that your current job has aspects that need improvement. Ask yourself what you can do today to make your job situation more actively helpful to yourself and to others." (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*)

Lesson Twenty-four Review Questions:

- 1. Does my job lead me to break any of the Five Precepts?**
- 2. Are there parts of my job that make it difficult to settle down?**
- 3. What tools do I have for dealing with difficult people in my job situation?**

Lesson Twenty-Five: Right Effort--Part 1

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the sixth aspect of that path.)

Right or Skillful Effort (*Samma Vayamo*) is the sixth factor in the Eightfold Path. It is part of the *Samadhi* (concentration) section which also includes Right Mindfulness (*Samma Sati*) and Right Concentration (*Samma Samadhi*).

Venerable Sariputta states: "And what, friends, is Right Effort? Here a Bhikkhu awakens zeal for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for the arising of unarisen wholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for the continuance, non-disappearance, strengthening, increase, and fulfillment by development of arisen wholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. This is called Right Effort" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 141:29).

In brief, Skillful or Right Effort has four parts:

1. Preventing the arising of unarisen unwholesome states (*akusala dhamma*),
2. Abandoning unwholesome states that have already arisen,
3. Arousing wholesome states (*kusala dhamma*) that have not yet arisen, and
4. Maintaining and perfecting wholesome states already arisen.

We need to look at each of these parts in terms of how they relate to our own lives.

1. Preventing the arising of unarisen unwholesome states: Bhikkhu Bodhi describes these states as "the defilements, and the thoughts, emotions, and intentions derived from them, whether breaking forth into action or remaining confined within." Maintaining mindfulness is the key to preventing unarisen unwholesome states from arising. We need to pay close attention to our thoughts, emotions and intentions. One helpful tool is to be aware when we are experiencing suffering or a sense of uneasiness. This is often a clue that something unwholesome has arisen. We need to examine our minds for evidence of greed, hatred, lust, jealousy and any negative mindstate. We need to see them immediately when they arise in the mind. "We should not give into them, but immediately, like a warrior with raised sword, cut them off, reject them, abandon them, knowing that they are detrimental to our well-being and spiritual progress" (*The Way to Peace and Happiness*).

2. Abandoning unwholesome states that have already arisen: The Buddha states: "Here monks, a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to overcome evil unwholesome states that have arisen" (*Digha Nikaya* 22:21). We need to arouse effort to overcome unwholesome thoughts that have arisen. This is helped by living a moral life which means observing the Five Precepts and working with the hindrances and fetters that cloud our minds. The Five Hindrances include desire or greed, ill will and hatred, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and worry and doubt. The hindrance of greed or covetousness can appear as desire for food, or things that you want to possess. The hindrance of ill will appears as hatred, anger, resentment: "Ill will also distorts our perceptions and sours our joys. It is like a sickness that make delicious food so tasteless that we cannot enjoy it. Similarly, when our mind is filled with

hatred, we cannot appreciate the fine qualities of the people around us" (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

The hindrance of dullness and drowsiness keeps us from awareness of our thoughts as does restlessness. If our mind is filled with too many worries about the past and future, we cannot be aware of what is happening in the present moment. Doubt is the fifth hindrance. If we doubt the teachings of the Buddha, we can look at the suffering and impermanence in our own lives to see the truth of the teachings.

3. The third aspect of Right or Skillful Effort is to arouse wholesome states that have not yet arisen.: "We replace those states [unwholesome] with wholesome ones, such as loving thoughts, ideas of generosity, or feelings of compassion" (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

It is helpful to use antidotes to replace unwholesome thoughts with wholesome ones. For example, if thoughts of anger or ill will arise, we need to first be mindful of what is arising, recognize the impermanence of all emotional states and try to have another perspective on the situation: it is best to replace thoughts of ill will with thoughts of loving-kindness. Similarly, when desire arises, such as craving for Ben and Jerry's Cherry Garcia ice cream, we need to remind ourselves what it will look like after it has been digested.

Dull and drowsy mindstates can be treated by stirring up energy in many ways: taking eight or nine deep breaths and then holding the breath, looking at bright lights, rubbing and pinching the earlobes, massaging the muscles which connect the neck to the shoulders, doing standing or walking meditation, or washing your face with cold water. It also helps to do some yoga, walking meditation or Tai Chi. When restlessness and worry arise, we can bring the mind back to the breath and feel the contact of the body on the cushion. An antidote to doubt is to investigate your experience with the Four Noble Truths. Ask yourself if they make sense in terms of your own life.

4. The fourth aspect of Right or Skillful Effort is to maintain and perfect wholesome states that have already arisen: "He rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development. This is called Right Effort" (*Digha Nikaya 22:21*). Right Effort aims at maintaining the arisen, wholesome factors. It is called the "endeavor to maintain" (*anurakkhanappadhana*). We can change our habitual, conditioned negative thought process.

With mindfulness we can become aware when thoughts such as greed, hatred, ill will arise within us. We can remove the heavy load that we carry as we replace these thoughts with loving friendliness, generosity, and compassion: "The fourth aspect is to make those good, positive states of mind grow great and continuous so that the negative states have no opportunity to arise" (*The Way to Peace and Happiness*).

Lesson Twenty-five Review Questions:

1. Can you notice unwholesome thoughts as they arise?
2. Can you see the suffering they cause?
3. What is your experience when you replace unwholesome thoughts with wholesome? Write about two examples of this in your life.
4. What effect has this had on the quality of your life?

Lesson Twenty-six: Right Effort--Part 2

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the sixth aspect of that path.)

This Dhamma lesson is a continuation of Right Effort Lesson Twenty-five which described two parts of Skillful or Right Effort: preventing the arising of unarisen unwholesome states and abandoning unwholesome states. This lesson will focus on the third and fourth parts of Right Effort. The third aspect of Right or Skillful Effort is to arouse wholesome states that have not yet arisen. "We replace those states [unwholesome] with wholesome ones, such as loving thoughts, ideas of generosity, or feelings of compassion" (*Eight Mindful Steps To Happiness*).

It is helpful to use antidotes to replace unwholesome thoughts with wholesome ones. For example, if thoughts of anger or ill will arise, we need to first be mindful of what is arising, recognize the impermanence of all emotional states and try to see have another perspective on the situation and then replace them with thoughts of loving-kindness.

Dull and drowsy mindstates can be treated by

- taking eight or nine deep breaths and then holding the breath,
- looking at bright lights,
- rubbing and pinching the earlobes,
- massaging the muscles which connect the neck to the shoulders,
- doing standing or walking meditation
- washing your face with cold water.
- doing some yoga, walking meditation or Tai Chi.

When restlessness and worry arise, we can bring the mind back to the breath and feel the contact of the body on the cushion. An antidote to doubt is to investigate your experience with the Four Noble Truths. Ask yourself if they make sense in terms of your own life.

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment can also help us to arouse wholesome mind states:

- 1) mindfulness,
- 2) investigation,
- 3) energy,
- 4) joy,
- 5) tranquillity,
- 6) concentration,
- 7) and equanimity.

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment are presented in the order in which they arise. They arise naturally as our mindfulness develops, the development of each factor leads to the next. "The experience of enlightenment, perfect and complete understanding, is just these seven components working in unison to break all shackles and bring final release from sorrow" (*The Noble Eightfold Path*).

The path to enlightenment begins with mindfulness. Mindfulness helps us to discriminate between wholesome and unwholesome qualities of mind. We investigate the nature of impermanence, dissatisfaction and selflessness in every experience. The work of investigation requires energy. The mind is energized by this insight into the true nature of things. As energy increases we experience rapture or joy as we develop understanding of the nature of objects. Rapture or joy builds up to an agitated, restless mindstate which eventually subsides into tranquillity. A calm mind leads to concentration.

"All factors are in harmony-mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquillity, and concentration. They are all in balance. At this stage the equanimity factor of enlightenment takes over. Seeing whatever arises in a very impartial, steady state, equanimity purifies each of the other factors...the mind is in an equanimous state...When each of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment has been perfected, we achieve *Nibbana*, perfect happiness and perfect peace" (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

The fourth aspect of Right or Skill Effort is to maintain and perfect wholesome states that have already arisen. "He rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not to let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development. This is called Right Effort" (*Digha Nikaya 22:21*).

Right Effort aims at maintaining the arisen, wholesome factors. It is called the "endeavor to maintain" (*anurakkhanappadhana*) We can change our habitual, conditioned negative thought process. With mindfulness we can become aware when thoughts such as greed, hatred, ill will arise within us. We can remove the heavy load that we carry as we replace these thoughts with loving friendliness, generosity, and compassion. "The fourth aspect is to make those good, positive states of mind grow great and continuous so that the negative states have no opportunity to arise" (*The Way to Peace and Happiness*).

Lesson Twenty-six Review Questions:

1. What is your experience when you replace unwholesome thoughts with wholesome thoughts?
2. Write about two examples of this in your recent experience.
3. What effect did these experiences have on the quality of your day?

Lesson Twenty-seven: Right Mindfulness-Part 1

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the seventh aspect of that path.)

Right or Skillful Mindfulness (*Samma Sati*) is the seventh factor in the Noble Eightfold Path. It is part of the *Samadhi* (concentration) section which also includes Right Effort (*Samma Vayamo*) and Right Concentration (*Samma Samadhi*). What is Right or Skillful Mindfulness? "Mindfulness is paying attention from moment to moment to what is. Because we unknowingly perceive ourselves and the world around us through thought patterns that are limited, habitual, and conditioned by delusions, our perception and subsequent mental conceptualization of reality is scattered and confused. Mindfulness teaches us to suspend temporarily all concepts, images, value judgments, mental comments, opinions and interpretations. A mindful mind is precise, penetrating, balanced, and uncluttered. It is like a mirror that reflects without distortion whatever stands before it" (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

Most of the time our minds are in the past or future. We are not in the present moment and this creates unnecessary suffering. An example of this is worrying about getting sick or being injured anticipating a trip to India and then realizing how much energy was wasted since everything was fine. Obsessing on events in the past such as having angry feelings towards a friend or family member also causes suffering, an accumulation of stress, anxiety and confusion.

The Buddha has explained how to cultivate Skillful Mindedness through a practice called the "Four Foundations of Mindfulness" (*cattaro satipatthana*): "Bhikkus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realization of *Nibbana*--namely the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. What are the four? Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu abides

- 1) contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world. He abides
- 2) contemplating feelings as feelings, ardent, fully aware, and mindful...He abides
- 3) contemplating the mind as mind...He abides
- 4) contemplating mind objects as mind objects as mind objects, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 10).

1. Mindfulness of the Body (*Kayanupassana*)

The Buddha presents four main subjects for being mindful of the body: breathing, posture, the 32 parts of a body, and the body's foulness and decay.

A) The Buddha begins with mindfulness of breathing. The breath is always with us. Focussing on the breath helps us to be in the present moment. The Buddha speaks about breathing in and out with long and short breaths: "Breathing in long, he understands: 'I breathe in long'; or breathing out long, he understands: 'I breathe out long.'" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 10). He speaks of becoming aware that each in and out breath has three phases, the beginning, middle and end. One can note the pauses between breaths. The breath can be noted at the nostrils or abdominal area. The mind will go off to thoughts, sounds, memories, and emotions. We can then direct our attention to these objects, one at a time, but always returning to the breath. The meditator's breath will become increasingly calm and peaceful. "Each time the mind returns to the breath, it comes back with deeper insight into impermanence, dissatisfaction and selflessness" (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

B) Mindfulness of posture means knowing when we are sitting, standing, walking or lying down. Why should this be so difficult? What insight can we gain by our awareness of the postures of the body? We can see that "our physical movements are always changing, even if you seem to be holding still. Your heart pulses, heat radiates from your body, your lungs expand and contract. Cultivate the awareness of their impermanence" (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

We can notice the four elements in the body. The earth element has the heaviness and solidity of the physical body and this can root us in the present moment. The earth element can be experienced in walking meditation. We watch our intention to lift our foot, we see impermanence as it lifts, swings forward and with heaviness, drops. Thoughts, feelings, perceptions and consciousness rise and fall and we return to awareness of our breath and physical body.

C) The foulness of the bodily parts. The Buddha recommended that we reflect on the body being composed of thirty-two parts to better understand its real nature. This meditation on unattractiveness is meant to counter infatuation with the body and eliminate sensual desire. "In this body there are head-hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth...bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, etc." (*Majjhima Nikaya* 10).

D) In *The Nine Charnel Ground Contemplations* we are reminded that "everything formed is impermanent....And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a Bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 10).

Lesson Twenty-seven Review Questions:

1. Follow the Buddha's instructions on the Mindfulness of Breathing. What is your experience?
2. Do the same with the Four Postures.
3. Notice the earth element as you do walking meditation.

Lesson Twenty-eight: Right Mindfulness-Part 2

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the seventh aspect of that path.)

Right or Skillful Mindfulness (*Samma Sati*) is the seventh factor in the Noble Eightfold Path. This lesson is a continuation of Right Mindfulness Lesson Twenty-seven which described mindfulness practice. Also included was a discussion of the first Foundation of Mindfulness. This lesson will continue with the second, third and fourth Foundations of Mindfulness: 2) contemplating feelings as feelings, 3) contemplating the mind as mind, and 4) contemplating mind objects as mind objects.

2. Mindfulness of Feeling (*Vedananupassana*)

"And how, Bhikkhus, does a Bhikkhu abide contemplating feelings as feelings? Here, when feeling a pleasant feeling, a Bhikkhu understands: 'I feel a pleasant feeling'; when feeling a painful feeling, he understands: 'I feel a painful feeling'; when feeling neither-a-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he understands 'I feel neither-a-painful-nor-pleasant feeling'" (*Majjhima Nikaya* 10:32). The word "feeling" is used here, not in the sense of an emotion such as sadness, but in a narrower sense. There are three types of feelings: pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. Feeling is present at every moment of experience. Feeling arises out of contact (*phassa*) with a sense object.

There are six kinds of contact (the Sixfold Base) which is distinguished by the Six Sense faculties: 1) eye contact, 2) ear contact, 3) nose contact, 4) tongue contact, 5) body contact and 6) mind contact. When a pleasant feeling arises, we often cling to it. When a painful feeling arises, we experience aversion in terms of hate and displeasure. We usually don't pay much attention to neutral feelings.

The object that we come into contact with is not the source of suffering but rather the feelings that create the clinging or aversion to that object. We don't always fall into these unwholesome mind states. If we can be mindful of each arising of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings, we can avoid being pulled into the experience of suffering. We simply note the feeling quality and its tone. An example of this is hearing the sound of a gun shot. We just note unpleasant and thus avoid getting into memories and fears relating to past experiences with gun sounds. This helps us to let go of the negative response and reactions.

3. Mindfulness of the Mind (*cittanupassana*)

This refers to watching the different mental states rise and pass away. "Here, a monk knows a lustful mind as lustful, a mind free from lust as free from lust; a hating mind as hating...a deluded mind as deluded... a contracted mind... distracted mind... a developed mind...surpassed mind...concentrated mind... liberated mind... (*Digha Nikaya*). We gain insight into impermanence, dissatisfaction, and selflessness as we watch each mind state rise and fall.

4. Mindfulness of Mental Objects (*dhammanupassana*)

Mental objects include thoughts and any other images, feelings, positive mental factors and sensory stimulations which arise in our experience. All of these are contemplated with the categories of the Five Hindrances; the six senses; the Ten Fetters which arise with contact with the particular sense; the Five Aggregates; the Seven Factors of Enlightenment; and the Four Noble Truths. Understanding the Four Noble Truths is in fact the most important of them all and only makes deep sense when the other categories have been contemplated first (*The Way to Peace and Happiness*).

Mental objects arise in our sitting and walking meditation. We focus on our primary object such as the breath and perhaps the hindrance of sense desire will arise. We simply notice this mindstate and watch it pass away. We can observe the qualities of *Anicca*, (impermanance), *Dukkha* (dissatisfaction), and *Anatta* (selflessness). The Five Hindrances include anger or ill will, sense desire, sloth and torpor, restlessness, and doubt. Another mental object is that of the Five Aggregates of Grasping and Clinging. We watch the arising and disappearance of (1) material form, (2) feelings, (3) perceptions, (4) mental formations, and (5) consciousness.

Fetters are unwholesome states of mind that arise from greed, hatred and delusion and cause suffering. They arise dependent on the six-fold sense base. The Ten Fetters are (1) belief in a permanent self/soul, (2) doubt, (3) belief in the efficacy of rules and rituals, (4) greed, (5) hatred, (6) desire for rebirth in material form and for rebirth in immaterial form, (7) conceit, (8) restlessness, (9) worry, and (10) ignorance. "Here a monk knows the eye, knows sight objects, and he knows whatever fetter arises dependent on the two. And he knows how an un-arisen fetter comes to arise, and he knows how the abandonment of an arisen fetter comes about, and he knows how the non-arising of the abandoned fetter in the future will come about. He knows the ear and knows sounds...He knows the nose, and knows smells...tongue and knows tastes...body...mind and mind objects... So he abides contemplating mind-objects internally...And he abides detached, not grasping at anything in the world" (*Digha Nikaya*).

We observe how everything we experience fits into the Four Noble Truths, the truth of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering. "As your mindfulness improves, you naturally begin to observe the factors of enlightenment-the qualities of mind necessary to achieve the goal of the path. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment are mindfulness, investigation, effort, joy, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity...When each of these Seven Factors of Enlightenment has been perfected, we achieve *Nibbana*, perfect happiness, perfect peace. We can achieve this goal within this life" (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*). "Developing the detachment and non-identification to the body, feelings, mind states and *Dhammas*, seeing them as *Anicca*, *Dukkha*, and *Anatta* is the most important part of the sutta and the practice of mindfulness" (*The Way to Peace and Happiness*).

Lesson Twenty-eight Review Questions:

1. Note how you relate to pleasant or unpleasant feelings.
2. Note mind objects such as anger, ill will and try not to be caught up in them.
3. Be aware of mental objects as they arise.

Lesson Twenty-nine: Right Concentration-Lesson 1

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the eighth and final aspect of that path.)

*There is no concentration without wisdom,
No wisdom without meditation
One who has both wisdom and concentration
Is close to peace and emancipation.*

Right or Skillful Concentration (*Samma Samadhi*) is the eighth factor in the Noble Eightfold Path. It is part of the *Samadhi* section which also includes Right Effort (*Samma Vayamo*) and Right Mindfulness (*Samma Sati*).

The Buddha spoke about Right Concentration when he said: "What, Bhikkhus, is noble Right Concentration with its supports and its requisites, that is, Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness? Unification of mind equipped with these seven factors is called Noble Concentration with its supports and requisites." (*Majjhima Nikaya* 117: 2,3) The Buddha is talking about full concentration or *jhana* which will be discussed in Lesson #30. Lesson #29 will focus on what Bhante Gunaratana calls "ordinary wholesome concentration."

What do we mean when we say someone is concentrating? Hunters stalking a deer or a wild turkey, criminals tracking their victims, a person reading a book or watching a movie, all are acting with a concentrated mind but this cannot be characterized as *samadhi*. The concentration the Buddha taught has three characteristics:

- 1) it is always wholesome,
- 2) it has one-pointed focus
- 3) and it includes mindfulness for the development of wisdom.

Unwholesome states of concentration often include the five hindrances. We cannot be focused if our minds are full of sensual desire such as lustful thoughts for a person or craving for our favorite food, anger, lost in a half-awake dream state, agitation and restlessness, or doubt about the Buddha's message. Living a moral life by observing the five precepts is a necessary requisite to helping us maintain wholesome concentration. We take the training rule to abstain from killing, taking what is not given, not be involved in sexual misconduct and in general not be misled by sensual pleasure.

We need to be mindful of our speech and not take intoxicants and drugs that will cause heedlessness. "Wholesome concentration helps you focus on positive thoughts, speech, and actions and abstain from unwholesome ones...The insight that can arise from ordinary wholesome concentration can transform lives... that is why the Buddha said that wholesome concentration spearheads all wholesome mental states." (Bhante Gunaratana) "One pointedness of mind explains the fact that in any act of consciousness there is a central point of focus" (*The Noble Eightfold Path*). We can train ourselves to develop deep concentration by working with a good teacher, attending retreats and meditating for longer periods.

Mindfulness of breathing (*Anapanasati*) is one of the primary methods the Buddha described in his list of forty objects for developing *samadhi*. "Once the mind settles down one might make use of other objects to help with problems that arise. The meditation on lovingfriendliness could be used to counteract anger and ill will, mindfulness of the bodily parts to weaken sensual lust, and the recollection of the Buddha to inspire faith and devotion. The ability to select that subject appropriate to the situation requires skill, but this skill evolves through practice" (*The Noble Eightfold Path*).

Bhante Gunaratana describes the steps to establish wholesome right concentration. Blocking the hindrances was described earlier. He also suggests giving up thoughts of attachments to ideas, people and habits, letting go of things we have left undone, cultivating loving-friendliness, focussing the mind on the breath and staying in the present moment.

Samadhi is not an end practice in itself, but is practiced in order to facilitate the arising of insight by applying *satipatthana* awareness [mindfulness of the body, feelings, mind states and mental objects]" (*The Way to Peace and Happiness*).

Great becomes the fruit,
great is the gain of concentration
when it is fully developed and
grounded on virtuous conduct.
Great becomes the fruit,
great is the gain of wisdom
when it is fully acquired by concentration.
Utterly freed from the taints of lust,
of becoming, and ignorance is the mind
that is fully developed in wisdom (and has realized *Nibbana*)
(*Digha Nikaya* 16)

Lesson Twenty-nine Review Questions:

1. What interrupts with your concentration during meditation?
Write about this in your meditation journal.

2. Which hindrances interfere with your concentration?

3. What is happening in your daily life that creates barriers to concentration?

Lesson Thirty: Right Concentration-Part 2

(The Fourth Noble Truth is the way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is following the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the eighth and final aspect of that path.)

Lesson Twenty-nine described the difference between wholesome and unwholesome concentration. The Buddha describes wholesome concentration as containing the seven factors of the Noble Eightfold Path: Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness.

In the *Majjhima Nikaya Discourse*, he is quoted as saying: “Unification of mind equipped with these seven factors is called Noble Concentration with its supports and requisites (117:2, 3). Lesson Thirty will discuss full concentration which can lead to full absorption, full concentration or *jhana*.”

Again in the *Majjhima Nikaya Discourse*, the Buddha states:

But what, *Brahmin*, are the states that are higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision?

Here, *Brahmin*, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a *Bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the first *jhana*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. This is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

Again, with the stilling of applied thought and sustained thought, a *Bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the second *jhana*, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration. This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

Again, with the fading away as well of rapture, a *Bhikkhu* abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure in the body, he enters upon and abides in the third *jhana*, on account of which nobles ones announce: he has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful. This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision.

Again, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, a *Bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the fourth *jhana*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. This too is a state higher and more sublime than knowledge and vision. (30: 13-16.)

How can we achieve the first level of concentration? We must first clear our minds of any hindrances such as desire (*kamacchanda*), greed, aversion or ill will (*vyapada*), sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*), restlessness (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikiccha*). We cannot attain any level of concentration if these hindrances or defilements are present.

There are three levels in the development of *samatha* or concentration meditation. The first level is what was described in Lesson Twenty-nine as ordinary concentration brought about by the meditator focusing on a primary object such as the breath or body sensations. The second level is access concentration. This can be done in a number of ways such as using techniques of "mindfulness of breath" (*anapanasati*), which means "in-breath and out-breath" (*anapana*) with mindfulness (*sati*). These techniques include "body sweeping" in which one moves slowly through the body from head to toe, noticing all the sensations, and focusing on loving-friendliness or *metta*.

“The second stage...access...concentration is marked by the temporary suppression of the Five Hindrances and the arising of the *jhana* factors. The third level culminates in full or absorption concentration (*jhana*) which is the complete immersion of the mind in its object and the full absorption of the *jhana* factors” (*The Way to Peace and Happiness*).

Next, the five mental factors come together including initial application of thought (*vitakka*), sustained application of thought (*vicara*), rapture (*piti*), happiness, and one-pointedness (*ekaggata*). “Any of these factors may arise alone or combined under various circumstances. Happiness arises whenever hatred disappears. When sleepiness fades, 'initial application of thought' may arise. When restlessness and worry fade, joy may arise” (*Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness*).

Initial application of thought does the work of directing the mind to the object. Once this is done, sustained application of thought helps to anchor the mind on the object. Bhikkhu Bodhi describes this as comparing initial application of thought to the striking of a bell whereas sustained application of thought refers to the bell's reverberation. There is a welling-up of rapture (*piti*) or joy and also happiness. Rapture and happiness (*sukha*) or pleasure share similar qualities but are not the same.

Venerable Bhante Gunaratana states that, in the first *jhana*, the mind has the qualities of equanimity, tranquility, one-pointedness, mental factors of contact, feeling, perception, volition, and life force as well as energy and zeal.

After attaining the first *jhana*, one is encouraged to master it until one can enter it repeatedly before moving on to subsequent *ghanas*. “This is called Right Concentration. And that, monks, is called the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering” (*Digha Nikaya* 22).

Lesson Thirty Review Questions:

1. Describe any experiences in attaining a level of concentration which included the suppression of the hindrances.
2. What techniques do you use to enter into access concentration?
3. Is your concentration improving?

