

RETURN TO TRANQUILITY



By
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BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA

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1. Introduction

The well-known Greek philosopher Socrates is supposed to have said: “The unexamined life is not worth living.” A perfect example of a person who not only examined his life, but also performed a drastic change in his life was Prince Siddhatta Gotama. He was born in an extremely wealthy royal family, was brought up in the lap of ultimate luxury, and enjoyed the greatest of material comforts available at the time. When, however, he became aware of the realities of life that every one of us normally recognizes, but usually takes for granted, he saw it as a challenge to humanity, which needs an adequate response. So while the great majority was dozing in slumber he decided to face the challenge alone for the sake of all living beings. He took a drastic step in renouncing his princely life and turning into a severe ascetic, ending up in ultimately becoming the Buddha.

Many of us are familiar with the story of Prince Siddhartha, but how many of us, however, have even questioned ourselves about the kind of life we live?

Some of us have heard the story of the farmer forlorn who sold his farm and went in search of a mythical diamond field, which was supposed to lie far away from his home. Years later, having lost all his wealth, in his futile search, never having found the fabled diamonds, having grown very old and feeble, unable to find his way back home, he somehow happened to return to the property he sold, to find to his surprise that the new owner of his farm had a diamond mine on his land.



We too may find ourselves in a similar situation, having lost our way in the wilderness, while searching for a diamond field, not knowing how to find our way home. Then somehow we happen to finally return home, to find, as many people do, that the home we left behind is the very diamond field we have been looking for.

This may be puzzling to the reader at this point. So let me put it in another way: Are you in search of happiness? Do you find that the more you seek happiness, the more you become unhappy? Where are you looking for happiness? Aren't you looking for happiness in the world outside? If, instead of looking for happiness outside, you could only look within yourself, you would undoubtedly find a wonderfully pleasant **centre of peace** within you. This centre of peace is the **equilibrium** you lost, when you were bombarded by the various stimuli in the world outside. This loss of equilibrium occurs in everyone's life right from childhood. This is because we are attracted and repelled and shaken about by a variety of sensations in the world outside, even at birth. If now as adults we are still caught up in this disarray, we find it so difficult to creep out of this mess. In our original state as a child, we were quite restful, comfortable and happy. But, in seeking pleasure and trying to avoid pain in the world outside, we became restless, lost our equilibrium and became miserable. Do you realize that in your search for happiness, you are really struggling to get back that lost equilibrium, which was so pleasant? This equilibrium is to be found not outside, but at the centre of peace within you.

Religious symbolism labels this peace within, by the term **God**, "Be still, and know: 'I am God'" (Bible). Didn't Jesus say, "The Kingdom of God is within you?" Though religion

calls this stillness within “**God**,” some prefer to call it plain **STILLNESS**.

While the Bible says, “Be still and know, ‘I am God,’” Hindu yogis still the mind to realize, “I am Brahma” (*Brahma* = God). The Buddha called this stillness **NIRVANA**, “The Imperturbable Serenity” (*akuppa ceto vimutti*) or the absolute freedom from emotional turbulence. It is wonderful that all the sages of old reiterate this same notion of **stillness** as the “Greatest Good,” or even **God**. Does the modern world value **STILLNESS**?

The “work ethic” of the modern age, however, allows no place for tranquility or stillness. Inactivity is often considered to be a sin. One who is inactive feels guilty, and begins to suffer from an inner compulsion to keep busy even against ones will. No wonder the distinctive malady of the modern age is stress. Hans Selye, who is considered to be the father of modern stress theory, points out that stress is not what is going on in the world outside us, but our reaction to what is going on outside, which means stress is the inner turbulence of the body and mind. Isn’t he restating what the Buddha said more than two thousand five hundred years ago?

When faced with the changing vicissitudes of life
If one’s mind can remain imperturbable
Free from grief, passion, or fear
This is the Greatest Blessing.

*Putthassa loka dhammehi
Cittaṇ yassa nakampati
Asokaṇ virajaṇ kemaṇ
Etaṇ mangala muttamaṇ
--- Buddha*

Although excitement and activity have become the popular pursuits of the modern age, researchers in the field of stress management and those in the helping professions have begun to recognize the importance of calm and tranquility in the life of human beings. In this search for tranquility some have even discovered Buddhism. Psychologists and physicians have begun to use Buddhist techniques in fields such as psychotherapy, stress management, and even in the treatment of psychosomatic diseases.

The popularity of Buddhism and Buddhist meditation is fast on the increase today, especially in the modern West. Scientists are beginning to realize that Buddhism is the only religion that is fully compatible with modern scientific thinking. Some question whether Buddhism would become the religion of the modern world? Others are greatly grieved, however, that the new generation of Westerners is turning East.

Amazingly, although Christianity spread in the East through high-pressure missionary activity, Buddhism has not come to the modern West through the efforts of Buddhist missionaries. It was the Westerners themselves who brought Buddhism to the West, having become interested in Buddhism, and realizing its value.

Some members of the Western religious clergy have begun to study Buddhism, and find it not only enlightening but they have even started interpreting their own religion in the light of Buddhist thought. Some are even using Buddhist meditation techniques in Western religious institutions to complement their own practice. The interesting point is that while Buddhist concepts are gaining access to the educated Western mind at a tremendous speed, the Western missionaries are struggling hard to convert the poverty ridden, uneducated

Eastern families through bribery and corruption, in fear of the possible disappearance from the world of their favorite religious dogmas.

In view of this new upsurge of interest in Buddhism in the modern West interested students have expressed the need for a short introduction to the practice of Buddhism in their own daily lives. This book is a response to this call.

2. What is Buddhism?

Buddhism is unique in that it defies classification into the usual pigeonholes of Western thought. Buddhism is neither a theistic religion based on the belief in a Supernatural Creator, nor an armchair philosophy based on speculation. It is more like an experimental science based on observation, inference and verification. Yet it can be seen as a humanistic religion, concerned with the development of the human



potential, to solve the human predicament. It can also be seen as a pragmatic philosophy concerned with the solution of the fundamental problem of life, which has been drawn attention to by the modern existentialist philosophers. Buddhism solves the problem of existence not through existential thinking, however, but through a paradigm shift from existential thinking to experiential thinking.

Buddhism can even be seen as an introspective science, or a form of psychology that deals with the mind and its functions. It is even more valuable, however, to consider it to be a special form of psychotherapy that turns normal unhappiness to supernormal happiness through perfection of mental health. The best way to identify the teaching of the Buddha, however, is to understand that it as a process of evolution, where the human being goes beyond the biological evolutionary process, in going through a psychological process of evolution of the human mind, or human consciousness. Although the biological evolutionary process went on unconsciously, this psychological evolutionary process goes on consciously even addressing the **Problem of Mortality**, which every religion is attempting to finally solve, in its own way. This means, an understanding of the teachings of the Buddha helps one fully comprehend the **Problem of Existence**, which is the **Insecurity of Life** under the threat of the ever-hanging Damocles sword of impending death, which is ready at any moment to fall and crush every life that is born.

Religion: Theistic and Humanistic



While monotheistic religion points out that religion came down to earth from heaven carrying the message of the Creator, humanistic thinkers realize that religion is something that grew up on earth to satisfy a human need, to solve a human problem. The human problem is this problem of existence, which is mortality itself. This is why even monotheistic religions hope to gain eternal life and eternal happiness in heaven after death.

Out of all the infants of all the animals the human infant is the weakest. While the infant of all other animals will be able to move about and find food in a few minutes or a few days, the human infant needs a few years to be able to do so. When the human child feels insecure, the child runs to the father or mother for security. When these children grow up to adulthood, they begin to realize that the parents are as helpless as they themselves are. So when the adults are in difficulty where can they run? Culture has provided a solution. That solution is what we call religion.

How does religion attempt to solve this problem of insecurity in life? It runs into a dream world where there is an all-powerful father God or a multiplicity of supernatural gods who can use their powers to help. Humanistic thinkers have begun to criticize this cultural solution. Sigmund Freud called it a “collective neurosis,” and Carl Marx called it the “opium of the masses.”

Yet religion is not something to be thrown away so easily. It is not proper to define religion as the superstitious belief in supernatural beings. This is to throw away the baby with the bathwater. Religion serves a very important purpose. It provides a feeling of security, and it also provides an ethical code of conduct to a culture. Religion does not have to be theistic. It can also be humanistic. Humanism does not have to be atheistic either. Theism can be seen as an earlier stage in the evolution of religion. As religion evolves it can become humanistic and more rational. Then religion begins to solve the same problem of insecurity and morality in a more rational way. Just as the child when mature stops running to the parents for help, and instead begins to use his/her own intelligence to solve problems; religion too can grow up, by giving up theism

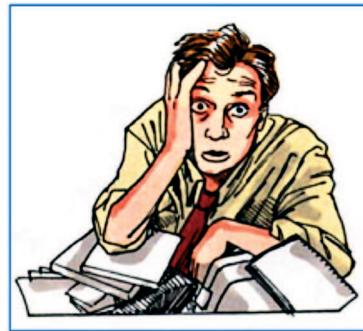
and becoming humanistic and rational, in solving the problem of existence.

Such an example of mature religion is Buddhism. Instead of seeking help in supernatural beings to solve the problem of insecurity the Buddha used his human intelligence to solve it. He examined the problem, its cause, its solution by removing the cause, and he found the way to remove the cause. This solution is given in the form of the Four Sublime Realities.

Buddhism is not atheistic it is humanistic. It has its own humanistic definition of God, and religion. Above all Buddhism is religion in its fully mature form. Buddhism is not an escape from the problem of existence into a fantastic dream world, but a real solution of the problem within reality here and now. This solution is a psychological transformation of the human mind using a human growth technique.

The problem of unhappiness

Do you find yourself enjoying life? If you do, you don't need to read this book. If you do not, you are like one of us who can admit that we are really suffering and unhappy. The purpose of this book is to show you the way to happiness. But first we must admit that we



are unhappy. We must know that we do have a problem. Then only can we begin to examine the problem and try to understand its solution. Then we can even test the solution in the crucible of our own experience. Only then does it become a truth or a

fact for us. Only then will we be willing to use our time and energy and even our money to solve our problem.

Unfortunately this problem is not a physical problem but a mental problem. If it is a physical problem, another person can solve it, such as a physician or surgeon, by means of drugs or an operation. A psychological problem, on the other hand, the patient or client himself must solve it using his own efforts. Another can only aid the individual through advice or other means.

Fortunately all human beings have one basic problem, which has only one basic cause because the human body and mind works basically in a similar way. If this were not so, the doctors would not be able to diagnose and treat patients for their sicknesses.

What is this basic human problem we all suffer from? “It is our inability to gratify our desires,” said the Buddha (*yampiccaṇ naḷabati tampi dukkhaṇ*). Some call this poverty. The way to overcome this poverty, they say, is to earn money. Can money satisfy all our desires? If we can satisfy a hundred desires, but one important desire remains unsatisfied, will we be happy? What are political problems? What are economic problems? Someone defined economics as “the study of how human beings attempt to satisfy their unlimited wants with the limited means at their disposal.” Most of us attempt to maximize the means to satisfy our wants. We call this, becoming RICH. Are rich people happy? The solution that the Buddha offered, however, was not to keep on increasing the means, but to learn to reduce the wants. If we keep on increasing the means our wants keep multiplying in direct proportion. Then we will never be satisfied, which means we will be unhappy forever.

Our problem then boils down to the method we can adopt to get rid of our desires?" The Buddha pointed out that our desires and actions begin with the thoughts we think. Thought precedes one's experience (*mano pubbangama dhamma*). Modern cognitive psychologists have now begun to realize this. This means, "As we think, so we feel, as we feel, so we act, as we act, so we reap the results of our actions." Our destiny depends on the thoughts we think.

In other words, it is our philosophy of life and our sense of values that govern our behavior, and our behavior governs our destiny. Yes, our actions are governed by the thoughts we think. If we think the wrong kind of thoughts, wrong actions will follow, which will result in bad consequences. If we think good, calm, and rational thoughts, we will act in the right way and reap good results. This is why the Buddha told us that the way to happiness begins with right thinking. This insight shows that the right way to live is to constantly watch the thoughts we think, and continue to think only good thoughts and not the bad thoughts.

Most of us begin to cultivate wrong habits of thought in childhood. Children learn to think good or bad thoughts from their parents and elders, or they learn it from friends they associate with. Sometimes the good or bad circumstances they go through, force them to form wrong childish interpretations of circumstances, and sometimes even of life in general. This can be dangerous to themselves as well as to others. Wrong concepts formed in childhood, which are carried into adult life, can even lead to murder, or even suicide. These thoughts made in childhood, with the child's mind, are not necessarily correct. When this way of thinking is carried into adult life, and one begins to interpret adult circumstances in the wrong way, with

a childish mind, this type of thinking and behavior is today known as neurotic behavior.

Escape or solution

Some children prefer to run away from problems by forgetting them than to solve the problems by finding the cause and eliminating the cause. As we become adults we tend to prefer to solve our problems than to escape. Those who tend to escape even as adults are the neurotics.

As a problem-solving adult, we first begin to understand the problem and its solution. When we have understood the problem we are faced with, its cause, and its solution, our next step is to bring about the solution by removing the cause.

Very often we find that the problem is a conflict between our desires and the external environment. This is understood by our intellect. The environment does not satisfy our desires. So we want to change our environment. But the environment is not under our control always. So instead of worrying about the environment, which is not under our control, if we would look within ourselves for the problem, we begin to realize that the real cause of our problem is not our environment, but our desire, which is in conflict with the environment. Often it is asking for the impossible. If this is the case, the real cause must be understood to be our emotions, which are not only blind but are also unconsciously executed.

Though unconscious, their occurrence is based on the natural law of determinism. This means, it happens only when the necessary conditions are present. In other words these are not things that we do consciously or voluntarily. They are not based on our willpower. Our emotional behavior is not based on a freewill, though most people think it is. This is why

sometimes even if we are quite conscious of what is good and bad, and also aware of the importance of good behavior, we become angry, and begin to act in a very unseemly way. People do forgive people for their actions in a fit of anger. This is because they are aware of this fact about bad temper. The bad act was not done consciously but unconsciously. If our emotional behavior is unconscious, we are not responsible for them. If so, the problem still remains: “How can we get rid of this terrible emotional behavior?”

It can be done, only by becoming conscious of the deterministic process that governs emotional behavior. We have to train our selves to be conscious of the conditions that start the emotional behavior. This procedure is what the Buddha called *satipatthana*, which is incorrectly translated today as **mindfulness**. Mindfulness is just being consciously aware of our behavior in relation to the surroundings. What is really needed here is not mindfulness but **introspection**. The Pali term is *Satipatthana* (*sati+upatthana*), which means placing the attention within, which is **introspection**. The words of the Buddha in the *Satipatthana Sutta: pari mukhan satin upatthapetva* means, “The attention that is normally focused externally, towards the surroundings, is turned inwards.” The English word that expresses this idea is **introspection**. The *Satipatthana Sutta* constitutes a detailed explanation of this introspective procedure, by the Buddha.

The purpose of this introspective procedure of the Buddha is to become consciously aware of the unconscious process that is going on. It is the conscious cognitive process that is becoming aware of this unconscious, autonomic, and affective process called emotion. When this is done, the unconscious affective process stops. This was what Sigmund Freud confirmed, and

wanted to ultimately bring about when he said, “In place of the *id* there shall be the *ego*.” His *id* referred to the affective and his *ego* referred to the cognitive.

Seen from a Buddhist perspective, it is unfortunate that the Neo-Freudians ignored the conflict between the *id* and the *ego*, and started focusing attention on a personal *ego* with its personal object. This way they turned from an experiential inlook to an existential outlook. Apart from the many mistakes Freud made, he did go on a line very close to the Buddha. This was clearly recognized by Eric Fromm, in his book, *Zen and psychoanalysis*.

It is important to realize that we are caught up in a mess, a **precarious situation**. We are unconsciously carried away by our emotional impulses, and we make ourselves as well as others suffer as a result.

When we **become conscious of the unfortunate situation** we find ourselves in, and we also become aware of the need to **return to** the original **stillness** within that we have **lost**. When we become aware of the **way we can return** to the original stillness, by **right thinking**. This insight makes us aware of the **true meaning of life** and the **purpose of life**. We become aware that stillness should be **our goal in life**, and the only way to attain to this goal, begins with **right thinking**. With right thinking we begin to **visualize stillness** as the goal of life. In visualizing stillness we visualize the example of stillness given by the individual who **pointed** to stillness of mind and relaxation of the body. This means the **serene figure of the Buddha** becomes the means to visualize



our goal. The more we think and **imagine the still figure of the Buddha**, the more we become calm in mind and relaxed in body. This then is the beginning of the Buddhist practice called meditation, which finally leads to the ultimate goal – **Nirvana**.

Becoming a Buddhist

When one begins the practice that leads to the true goal of life, one is on the way to become a Buddhist. One does not become a Buddhist by birth, or by the practice of rituals, or even by going through an initiation ceremony. One becomes a Buddhist only by going through a personal transformation, which solves the **problem of existence**. This needs further clarification.

There are two kinds of people who call themselves Buddhists but are questionable. Some see themselves as being Buddhists, because they were born into Buddhist families. Others see themselves as practicing Buddhists, because they practice Buddhist rituals. Both have no knowledge of what it is to become a Buddhist. Quite different from both “being” and “practicing” Buddhists are those who are making a genuine effort to **become** a Buddhist. Both “being” and “practicing” Buddhism in this aforesaid way, only makes a person stagnant, without moving forward, growing, or evolving. **Becoming a Buddhist, on the other hand, is a dynamic process of change and transformation, through growth and evolution.** It is through this process of evolution that the problem of existence could be solved.

Those who avoid the questionable extremes, and begin to study the philosophy, appreciate its value, and begin to live according to this philosophy are the ones who really benefit from the teachings of the Buddha. For them the term “Buddhist”

represents the **goal**, and the practice is the **means** to the goal. The **goal** is the most important thing in the mind of the one who wants to become a Buddhist.

This means, Buddhism is a technique of growth and evolution. It is a path of action with an end and a means to the end. One becomes a Buddhist in gradual stages. The ultimate end is the total freedom from all suffering caused by oneself to oneself, or by oneself to others.

According to modern psychological thinking, the purpose of modern psychotherapy is to bring abnormal suffering to a normal level of unhappiness. The purpose of this Buddhist, technique of growth on the other hand, is to bring normal unhappiness to a **supernormal** (*ariya*) level of happiness, which is also a transcendent level. This is why the Buddha is called the **Transcendent One** (*Tathagata*).

Buddhism and Biological Evolution

The real meaning of Buddhism can be understood only when it is seen in relation to the modern theory of biological evolution. It is quite clear that the present state of the human species is not the ultimate level of evolutionary development quite in spite of all the advances of modern science. This is why there is so much crime, war, and terrorism prevalent in the human world. The only way these problems can disappear from the world is through the maturity of the human mind. This maturity can be achieved only through further progress in the evolutionary process, which means the human being has to evolve further. This evolution does not have to be biological and unconscious. It should be mainly an evolution of the human consciousness, which means it has to be consciously achieved. This means Buddhism offers the only real solution

to the problems of the modern world. This solution could be fully comprehended only by understanding the philosophy and psychology of the Buddha. This philosophy is a different way of looking at life and our own mind.

The Mind, what it is

It is important to understand that what we call the **mind** is not another entity separate from the body, but an activity of the body. It is also an activity perceived from a subjective point of view, rather than from an objective point of view. This means every human experience is bifurcated into an objective and a subjective. The objective experience is seen as physical and the subjective experience is seen as mental. When speaking of the **human mind**, we refer to two activities of the body both perceived subjectively as mental: the cognitive and the affective, this is also commonly seen as reason and emotion. In common parlance, however, the cognitive is also referred to as the head and the affective is referred to as the heart.



When we consider the path of evolutionary progress, emotion is the more primitive part, and reason is the more recent part that distinguishes the human being from the less evolved animals. It is this rational faculty that has given rise to modern science and technology. It is this more advanced rational or cognitive part that has to evolve further till the human being evolves to a superhuman level. Such a level is

described in detail in the sacred texts of the Buddhists. There is even a higher level than the superhuman level mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures. It is the ultimate evolutionary level that the human evolutionary process can lead to or produce. It is at this point that the problem of mortality is completely solved, where the human being becomes truly IMMORTAL. This immortality, however, is not eternal life. It is freedom from the **delusion of existence**. Before one can die one must exist. If one does not exist, how can one die. When the delusion of existence is absent, death is absent too.

The process called life is an unconscious chemical process that went on unconsciously. It was only when the human being evolved that life became conscious. When life became conscious, the human being became aware of the problem of existence. It was Charles Darwin that became aware of the struggle for existence and the (so called) survival of the fittest. It was the Buddha who realized that the struggle for existence was only an unconscious impersonal chemical process and existence was not a real existence of a static entity. This unconscious struggle for existence was not only a futile struggle, but also a painful one. It should be and can be stopped by realizing that existence is a delusion and we do not really exist. There is only a struggle to exist but no real existence. Existence is a static concept in a dynamic reality.

Growth and Maturity

Evolution of the human being is a matter of growth and maturity. The mature individual is dominated by reason to a great extent, in relation to the immature child who is mainly emotional rather than rational. This means, the immature person and the child are dominated mostly by emotion. Emotion is blind,

while reason only is aware of the reality around. This awareness of the reality around us is what we call consciousness. But this consciousness of reality is often obstructed by emotions. This is why the emotions are taken to be hindrances by the Buddha. We often notice that when emotion and reason are in conflict, emotion always wins, even in a mature person. Emotion is powerful but blind. In the immature person, reason becomes the slave of emotion. In the mature person, reason guides emotion. In the present age the human being is not fully mature. Full maturity is a matter of the evolution of consciousness. This evolution of consciousness does not occur on a mass scale. Only a few individuals mature periodically. The time of the Buddha was such a period. Maturity of mind was at a maximum level during that period. It was the Buddha who reached this highest level of maturity of mind. A few other individuals before him had come close to the Buddha, and some reached the state by following him. As time passed, the environmental conditions that changed prevented people from achieving such a level of maturity.

Biological evolution took place unconsciously, but the evolution of consciousness involves conscious human effort. The human effort has to begin with an understanding of a problem and its solution. Very few human beings realize that our normal life is a problem. Life began as an impersonal chemical process that appeared to be an unconscious effort to be permanent in an impermanent world, which took the form of a struggle for existence. This struggle to exist is, however, an unrealistic and futile effort, which cannot succeed. This world and everything in it are impermanent, because everything that exists depends on conditions. Even if one condition is absent, the existence ceases. Therefore the struggle is a blind futile

struggle, which ends in dissatisfaction, disappointment, and frustration, which is painful and unpleasant.

While all living beings continued this futile and painful struggle quite unconsciously until the human being became conscious of the problem, it is left for the human being to solve the problem. It is this blind evolutionary process that produced a nervous system with a brain. With the development of the brain stem, the limbic system, and the cerebral cortex that helped in becoming conscious, there appeared the human being. It is this human being that became aware of a “world” and a “self” in it. This means he **became conscious**. It is this conscious human being, with the developed capacity to reason logically, who became aware of the process of evolution and also became aware of the futility and the painfulness of the struggle to exist, and decided to stop it. In doing so, however, he has to learn to overcome this powerful emotional urge that keeps the futile struggle going. Even if one becomes aware of the difficulty of the problem and even if the solution is seen, the solution of the problem is not an easy job. One has to learn to stop being carried away by the blind irrational emotions. The achievement of this goal is the awakening from the dream of existence, or becoming a **Buddha**.

Character Structure

One becomes a Buddhist by beginning the conscious process of evolution of consciousness. Who ever has studied the teachings of the Buddha and has understood the importance of the message of the Buddha can begin to practice with the hope of reaching the goal, which is a return to the original tranquility that was lost due to being bombarded by the environmental stimulations. All one has to do is to understand what Buddhist

living is, and begin to live it. To do so, one has to learn the character structure of a Buddhist.

A character structure constitutes five parts: ones philosophy of life, ones aim in life, what one speaks habitually, what one does habitually, and how one lives habitually. Habits are tendencies of behavior, which are perpetuated through practice. Practice means repetition. What one repeats becomes habitual. What one repeats habitually, becomes one's destiny. **What one repeats is what one is destined to be.** Therefore what one repeats one becomes. One repeats, however, only what one values. Therefore, **one becomes what one values.** What one values depends on ones sense of values, which in turn depends on ones philosophy of life. This character structure creates a disposition. This disposition is what one becomes.

An individual's disposition is an organized functional whole that is oriented to reach a definite goal. Every habit of thought, speech and action is an integral part of this functional whole, and necessary to reach this goal. The goal, however, is always visualized as a "person" one wants to be. One wants to become "someone." To be more precise, the goal is a "self image." In fact, one has two self images; what one "thinks one is," and what one "wants to be." If one focuses attention mainly on what one is, one stagnates, but if one focuses mostly on what one "wants to be," one grows and develops.

The person one wants to be is always a person one considers being "superior" in some form. One always wants to move from a state of inferiority to a state of superiority. Ones goal of superiority tends to be the "fulfillment" of what one considers to be lacking in oneself. What one wants is to be complete. In being complete, one becomes superior. What one considers being complete and superior depends on ones "sense

of values.” This sense of values again depends on ones view of life.

If one wants to become what one wants to be, one has to change ones character structure, which changes ones disposition. If not, any practice will be only a temporary fad, like trying out a new diet or fitness program. If one wants to change ones habits, one can do so only by changing ones character structure. This is to become a different person, by a personal transformation, a rebirth. In order to change one’s character structure, one has to start changing ones philosophy of life, ones sense of values, and ones goal in life. This will be followed automatically by a complete reorganization of ones thought, speech, action, and life to reach the desired goal.

One will then have a new way of thinking, a new way of feeling, and a new way of speaking, acting and living. Old habits not directed towards the desired goal will be dropped off and new habits relevant to the goal will be formed. Habits remain because they are relevant to one’s goal in life, held unconsciously, and therefore cannot be dropped off because they are essential to reach the goal. This means, a character structure that is organized to reach a certain goal cannot be broken without changing the goal. It is only by a goal change and a character transformation that one can change habits. This is the reason for the many failures in our attempts to overcome habits like overeating, drinking alcohol, smoking, etc.

One becomes a Buddhist only when one comprehends the Buddhist philosophy of life, the sense of values, and achieves the goal reorientation, which results in the reorganization of ones character structure to reach the Buddhist goal. Then ones thought, speech, and action fall in line with the goal. When this happens, one has **become an evolving,**

progressing Buddhist. This **becoming a Buddhist** is not an end, but a means to an end. It is only the beginning of a process of growth and evolution. It is the way to perfect mental health and happiness, which is a **supernormal state**.

Some of the above concepts are found in Western psychological thinking especially among the Adlerians, the Behaviorists, Cognitive Psychology, and in the modern “self-image psychology,” or psycho cybernetics. However, more than twenty-five centuries ago, the “Unsurpassable Trainer of Personality,” (*anuttaro purisadamma sarati*) the Buddha, the “Awakened One,” formulated a technique of transforming character based on these same principles and more. This technique is called the supernormal “Sublime Eight-fold Way.”

This “Sublime Eight-fold Way” is organized as a path of action that begins with the Harmonious Perspective. This is a perspective because this is an uncommon way of looking at life. This perspective brings about harmony between our wishes and reality. The common way of looking at life brings about a conflict between our wishes and reality, and so produces normal unhappiness.

Normally we have two kinds of wishes. One is based on conscious rational thinking. The other is based on unconscious emotional thinking. It is this unconscious emotional thinking that comes in conflict with the reality perceived through rational conscious thinking. Our rational thinking is aware of the impermanence of everything that is dependent on conditions. Our emotional thinking is blind to the fact of impermanence. Therefore it seeks permanence in an impermanent world. This creates the conflict between wishes and reality, resulting in suffering.

So the Harmonious Perspective is to understand the problem that we suffer from, to understand that the cause of the problem is the blind emotions that come in conflict, to understand that the problem can be solved only by eradicating the cause. The next problem is how can we eradicate the cause, which consists of emotions. If we can understand that the emotions are not what we do, but unconscious occurrences due to the presence of the necessary conditions. Then the emotions can be brought to a stop by depersonalizing the emotions, and becoming aware of the conditions that start them. This procedure has been enumerated and named the Supernormal Eightfold Way.

THE SUPERNORMAL EIGHTFOLD WAY

1. Harmonious Perspective
2. Harmonious Orientation
3. Harmonious Speech
4. Harmonious Action
5. Harmonious Life
6. Harmonious Exercise
7. Harmonious Attention
8. Harmonious Equilibrium.

This “Supernormal Eight-fold Way” is not a set of commandments or rules of living as some writers mistakenly think. It is a description of the character-structure and disposition of the true and healthy Buddhist. This character-structure is, in fact, a disposition or a functional whole organized to reach the goal of **imperturbable serenity**, **NIRVANA**. If one is to become a true Buddhist, one has to acquire this character structure.

This harmonious character structure is not a sudden acquisition, although sometimes it could appear to be so. After a long period of struggle to understand the meaning of life, the harmonious perspective may dawn upon one, as when the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle suddenly click into place. When the harmonious perspective appears, the rest of the structure falls into place. The individual's life becomes reoriented and reorganized to reach the very special goal called NIRVANA, the perfect mental health and happiness, the absolute freedom from emotional disturbance or the ultimate stage in the evolutionary process, which is Supernormal. This ultimate stage is the awakening from the dream of existence.

3. Harmonious Perspective

Harmonious Perspective is the perspective that brings about harmony within and without, and which does not create any conflict. The conflict within is the conflict between ones emotional impulses (*asava*) and ones sense of values (*hiri-ottappa*). The conflict without is the conflict between ones emotional impulses and the physical and social reality outside.

The harmonious perspective can be understood in four different ways at four different levels of emotional maturity. The four levels of maturity are: (1). Appreciation of goodness (*saddha*), (2). Knowing what is good behaviour (*sila*), (3). Understanding true happiness as purity and tranquility of mind (*samadhi*), and (4). Introspective insight into the true nature of life as instability, painfulness, and impersonality (*pañña*).

Appreciation of Goodness (saddha)

At the first level, the harmonious perspective is the right sense of values. This is the appreciation of goodness and truth. What is good is true and what is true is good; they cannot be separated. These two values represent the two parts of the human mind: the thinking part or head (*mano*), and the feeling part or heart (*citta*). In other words, it is the maturity of the head and the heart. In technical terms, these values refer to the maturity of the cognitive and the affective parts of the human psyche. When we speak of the **Buddha**, we speak of the **ONE who has gained perfection in emotional and intellectual maturity (arahant) (samma sambuddha)**. Therefore to value goodness and truth is to value the Buddha. To value the Buddha is to value his teaching, the *Dhamma*, and also the followers of his teaching, the *Sangha*. These three values, the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha are therefore called the **Triple Gem**; gem symbolizing value. It is the Holy Trinity of the Buddhist. The Buddhists worship this Trinity as Christians worship theirs. Buddhists do not pray, however, they only worship. Prayer, as the Buddhists understand it, is a supplication for help, while worship (worth + ship) is the appreciation of values. This appreciation is also called *saddha*, which is the Buddhist equivalent of faith. It is not based on blind belief but on an understanding and appreciation of the value of goodness and truth, and the belief in the possibility for a human being to reach that state of perfection, exemplified by the Buddha.

The right sense of values is the appreciation of what is good, pleasant and real. What is good, pleasant and real is tranquility, and tranquility is NIRVANA. Therefore, the right sense of values is the appreciation of Nirvana.

To appreciate is to value, to esteem, to hold in high regard, or consider being superior. When one appreciates Nirvana, one holds it in high esteem and considers it to be superior. Nirvana is the mental state of perfection attained to by the Buddha. Therefore to esteem Nirvana is to esteem the Buddha. The teaching of the Buddha is an explanation of Nirvana and the way to it. Therefore to esteem Nirvana is also to hold the Dhamma in high esteem. The disciples of the Buddha are those who practice the way to Nirvana and those who have attained to Nirvana. Therefore one who esteems Nirvana will also esteem the Sangha, or the community of followers.

In this way, the triad: Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha become a worshipped Holy Trinity of the Buddhist. To worship (worth + ship) is to regard something to be of great worth, or to hold in high esteem. This is why the Buddhist worships the Buddha, the “Awakened One,” but does not pray to the Buddha. A Buddhist does not pray to supernatural powers for help but takes refuge in the Wisdom of the Buddha to solve the problems in his/her life. To take refuge is to seek protection from the troubles and tribulations of life. In taking refuge in the Buddha, he/she takes refuge in the teachings, Dhamma. Because he/she receives the teachings, inspiration, and guidance from the Sangha, he/she also takes refuge in the Sangha. The “Buddha,” “Dhamma” and “Sangha” are the most precious things in the world for the Buddhist. The Buddhists regard them as their Holy Trinity. As the Buddhists hold this triad in high esteem, they call it the “Triple Gem,” (*ratanattaya*); because, “gem” represents value. As they are also the refuge of the Buddhist they are also called the “Triple Refuge” (*tisarana*). The one, who appreciates TRANQUILITY, appreciates the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

The appreciation of tranquility, or the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha, which is also the appreciation of goodness, happiness and truth, is the Buddhist right sense of values, called “*saddha*.” In Buddhism, *saddha* is the equivalent of faith in theistic religions. The Buddha is comparable to the God of theistic religions, but because Buddhism is humanistic, the term “God” takes on a different meaning from that in theistic religion. “God,” in the Buddhist sense, is the state of perfection, which one worships and takes refuge in. For the Buddhist then, God is not the Creator of the world, but the Savior of the world, the Buddha. The Buddha saves the world, not through supernatural power, but through natural wisdom.

This **taking of refuge is what makes Buddhism a religion.** Every religion provides refuge from the troubles



and tribulations of life. While Monotheistic religions provide refuge through the Almighty power of one Supreme Creator God, and Polytheistic religions do so through the power of a multiplicity

of supernatural gods, Humanistic Buddhism provides refuge through the natural wisdom of the Buddha, by developing the human potential for tranquility, intelligence and goodness. This is why Buddhism is called a humanistic religion. It is a religion because it sets out to allay the anxieties and fears of human existence, **not by running into a dream world of supernatural power, but by helping individuals realistically solve the problem of anguish by understanding it.**

The Buddha says in the *Dhammapada*:

*Many a mortal does refuge seek
In forest groves and mountain's peak
Temples, trees and images seek
In fear and trembling praying meek*

*Such refuge can safe not be
Such refuge can great not be
Such refuge can never be
Free from every fear there be*

*Who seeks refuge in the Buddha great
The Dhamma and the Sangha great
Four supernormal realities
Through harmonious awareness sees*

*Pain and how it comes to be
Then again what its end can be
The Supernormal Eight-fold way
That brings all pain to an end this way*

*This refuge, so safe it is
This refuge, supreme it is
This refuge, when sought it is
Free from every fear, it's peace.*

To seek refuge in the Buddha is to seek refuge in oneself and human intelligence. It is not seeking refuge in power – natural or supernatural. It is seeking refuge in the natural wisdom of the Buddha, which is humanly verifiable. Buddhism is also the worship of goodness rather than power. We seek power to control others and our circumstances. We seek wisdom to control ourselves, which turns into goodness. Buddhism helps us solve problems through self-transformation, not through the transformation of the world. This is how

Buddhism differs from both theistic religions and Marxism, which seek refuge in power, either supernatural or natural, to control circumstances.

Although theistic religions worship supernatural power, they also worship goodness. And when goodness and power become alternatives to choose from, goodness becomes the choice. For example, when the Jews accused Jesus of using the power of the devil to perform miracles, Jesus invited the Jews to examine his actions to find out whether they were good or bad. He pointed out that good comes only from God and what comes from the Devil is only evil. Because Jesus did only what was good through his miracles, his power had to come from God, and not the Devil. This shows that according to theistic thinking too, the essence of divinity is not power but goodness.

This worship of values matures into good behaviour. What we appreciate we tend to become. Good behaviour is unselfish behaviour, and bad behaviour is selfish. Therefore good behaviour is based on universal benevolence (*metta*). It is not based on the principle of punishment and reward.

Knowing Good and Bad Behaviour (sila)

At the second level, harmonious perspective is the ability to distinguish between good and bad behaviour. This also means to know that it is possible to change behaviour and to know how to change behaviour, which is essential to practice good behaviour. This is the harmonious perspective that helps good behaviour.

Behaviour is of three kinds: thought, speech and action. Bad behaviour is that which leads to the unhappiness of oneself as well as that of others. Good behaviour is what leads to

happiness of oneself and others. This is based on a consideration of not only for oneself but also for others.

There are ten kinds of bad behaviour enumerated by the Buddha, three of bodily action, four of speech, and three of thought:

Acts of body:

- 1) Hurting or harming others
- 2) Taking other's property without consent
- 3) Sexual misbehaviour, which is improper.

Acts of speech:

- 1) Dishonesty in speech
- 2) Discourteous speech
- 3) Harmful speech in another's absence
- 4) Irresponsible speech that spoils others minds.

Acts of thought:

- 1) Desire for others property
- 2) Hatred of others
- 3) Harmful views that lead to bad behaviour.

One who has the harmonious perspective avoids these 10 bad behaviours and cultivates their opposites, the good behaviours.

Knowing what True Happiness is (samadhi)

Learning how to purify the mind and to know the need to do so is the harmonious perspective at the third level.

True happiness is not the stimulation of the senses, which is considered to be pleasurable. True happiness comes through purity and tranquility of mind. Normally, happiness is seen

as the gratification of emotional impulses. This is achieved through efforts to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. But this, according to the Buddha, is the way to unhappiness. This kind of effort is futile because it leads to frustration and disappointment and constant dissatisfaction. It is not the way to true happiness.

Emotional reactions are mere reactions of the body to sensory stimulations or memories of them. They are mere disturbances of the mind and body, which are experienced as unhappiness. The only way to happiness is to learn to cultivate calmness of mind and relaxation of the body. It is done by cultivating the habit of thinking good thoughts which are also calming thoughts. Tranquility of mind is the real happiness. This is the meaning of meditation, which is an effort to purify and calm the mind. It is the tranquil mind that can gain insight into the true realities of life.

These emotional reactions are not thought-out deliberate actions. They are not things that we do. They are things that happen to us almost without our knowing how. This is why they are so difficult to get under control. These emotional impulses are therefore unconscious, blind and impersonal like thirst (*tanha*).

These emotional impulses are not static entities that can be stored anywhere, as sometimes instincts are supposed to be. They are impermanent, unconscious, dynamic processes. They are transient activities that come and go, having a beginning and an end, whenever the senses are stimulated. They can, however, become repetitious habitual tendencies. Their apparent continuity is due to their repetitiveness (*pono bhavika*).

Emotional impulses are basically of two kinds: those that seek pleasure (*loba*) and those that avoid pain (*dosa*). These

two kinds of emotional impulses represent the positive and the negative aspects of pleasure seeking (*kamasukallikanuyoga*). Emotional impulses makes us blind to reality (*moha*). These blind emotional impulses drive us towards the goal of pleasure and they seek immediate satisfaction (*nandi raga sahagata*). The object sought for pleasure can change from time to time (*tatra tatra abhinandani*). They do not find satisfaction only in one object all the time. They are variety craving – as the saying goes, “variety is the spice of life.”

Introspective Insight into the True Nature of Life (pañña)

The in-sight gained after purifying and tranquilizing the mind is the fourth level of the harmonious perspective. It is only the tranquil mind that can gain insight into the realities of life: instability, painfulness, and impersonality (*pañña*). This topic will be presented in more detail later.

The Outer Conflict

Outer conflict is the conflict between the pleasure-seeking emotions and the social and physical reality. Outer conflict occurs when the search for pleasure comes in conflict with other people or the physical environment itself.

The basic problem of life is our conflict with our circumstances. The world around us is not behaving, as we want. Even our body and mind do not behave, as we want. In other words, we have no control over our circumstances. That is, even with our modern scientific technology we are not able to gain full control over our circumstances. Modern science can make a few of our jobs easy, but still we are not in control of our circumstances. Man has been a toolmaker from the beginning.

New technology is only making better tools for us using human intelligence. Still mankind is as helpless as before.

This helplessness of mankind in a world that is difficult to understand, coupled with mankind's inability to gain control even over the mind, has led to the search for supernatural power to control circumstances. When natural human power fails, mankind seeks supernatural power. This much-needed supernatural power, man conceives in the form of gods. By believing in these supernatural beings, mankind gains hope and courage to live and endure the difficulties of life. Without this contrived world of supernatural beings, mankind would be lost in hopelessness. This however is only an escape from reality into fantasy. It is not a real solution of the problem but a placebo.

What the Buddha points out, however, is that our conflict with our circumstances is due to our irrational emotions. It is really our blind emotions that are in conflict with the reality of our circumstances. Our desires are unrealistic. We are seeking permanence in an impermanent world. We are not able to accept reality as it is. We cannot see ourselves growing old because we are attached to youthfulness. We cannot think of dying because we are attached to life. We cannot endure what is unpleasant because we react to it with hate. We are loath to part from what is pleasant because we become emotionally attached to it. We cannot bear frustration of our unfulfilled desires, because we seek immediate satisfaction of these desires.

If unrealistic emotions cause us to come in to conflict with reality, then what needs to be done is not to change reality to suit our unrealistic desires but **to change our unrealistic desires to suit reality**. If we try to change reality it is likely that we will only be escaping from reality into a dream world

where all desires will be satisfied through supernatural powers; and that is insanity. If religion was such an escape, it could only be seen as a collective neurosis, as Sigmund Freud saw it.

This is why, **for the Buddhist, religion is a transformation of self, and not an unrealistic effort to change reality with the help of supernatural power.** This is why, Buddhists do not seek help in gods, but in the natural human potential, which is the power of human intelligence (*buddhi*). To seek help in human intelligence is to seek help in one's own intelligence and that of others. The Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha symbolize this successful human intelligence in concrete form. Buddha is the one who achieved perfection in intelligence, Dhamma is his teaching, and the Sangha is the society of followers. This was why the Buddha said, "Live with oneself as light, oneself as refuge and no other refuge; live with the Dhamma as light, the Dhamma as refuge and no other refuge." This is why the true Buddhist takes refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha instead of supernatural powers.

The outer conflict can be further elaborated as follows:

Firstly, the pleasure-seeking emotional impulses clash with the interests of others. These impulses are antisocial and selfish. This is why the control of emotions is demanded by society and why social norms, laws and prisons have been instituted. Society punishes the individual who is unable or unwilling to control these self-centered impulses. Pressures from within, as well as from society, trouble the individual. Unable to deal with this conflict between emotions and society, an individual may become alienated from society and even become mentally ill.

Secondly, the search for pleasure clashes with the physical reality around. Changes in the physical environment

can frustrate the emotions and disappoint the person. On the other hand, to seek pleasure always and to avoid pain is to seek permanent pleasure. We know, however, that permanent pleasure is impossible. We know that in real life we have to part from pleasure and meet pain. Life is not a bed of roses without thorns. We cannot always have pleasure and we cannot always avoid pain. Sometimes our enjoyment of pleasure can hurt other people. Often things do not happen, as we want. This conflict between emotional impulses and the external environment creates, anxiety and unhappiness.

This clash between emotion and external reality is painful. Our impulses are blind, irrational and insatiable. These blind impulses drive toward an impossible goal. They seek immediate and permanent pleasure. Naturally, frustrations, disappointments, worries, anxieties, fears and dissatisfactions are bound to occur in this kind of pleasure-seeking life.

Thirdly, this search for pleasure leads to personalization and possessiveness. This means, we like to own our pleasures and bring them under our control permanently. By owning or personalizing, and identifying ourselves with what we own, we build and extend the notion of “self,” or “ego.” “I” become the center of the universe. Thus we build up a dream world of selfness and ownership and struggle to live in it as “the monarch of all I survey.” Yet, this often ends up in failure and disappointment. First we are attracted to pleasant appearances (*kama tanha*), and then it turns into a desire for ownership (*bhava tanha*). Finally, it turns into boredom, disgust, and the desire for riddance (*vibhava tanha*). This possessiveness also brings us in conflict with others. This may lead to the break-up of relationships, divorces, violent action, murder and even suicide.

Fourthly, this pleasure seeking is accompanied by a desire for the permanent existence of what we call, “ourselves” and “our own.” Thus we begin to live in the dream world of permanent “self existence.” We wish that what we personalize as “mine” and “myself” should not grow old or die; this applies to our own bodies as well as those of our loved ones. Youthfulness is pleasant to us, while old age is unpleasant. Health is pleasant to us, while disease is unpleasant. Life is pleasant to us, while death is unpleasant. Parting from the pleasant and meeting the unpleasant is painful. Not being able to have things as we want is frustrating. The cause of this suffering is undoubtedly unrealistic desires or blind emotional impulses, which result in personalization and suffering.

It is this clash between emotional urges and reality that the Buddha described in the form of the Four-fold Supernormal Reality (Four Noble Truths), laid out in the form of:

- 1) The **insecurity of life** (*dukkha*)
- 2) **Origin** of insecurity (*samudaya*)
- 3) **Ending** of insecurity (*nirodha*)
- 4) The **method of ending** insecurity (*magga*).

The **insecurity of life** has been described as:

- 1) Grief, lamentation, pain, distress and exhaustion
- 2) Birth, aging, disease and death
- 3) Parting from the pleasant and meeting the unpleasant
- 4) Not obtaining what is desired.

The **origin of the insecurity** of life is described as **the emotional urge** that is repetitive, comprising delight and lust, of fickle nature. They are as follows:

- 1) The emotional reaction to pleasant sensation – thirst for pleasure (*kama tanha*)
- 2) The emotional reaction to neutral sensation as – thirst for existence (*bhava tanha*)
- 3) The emotional reaction to unpleasant sensation – thirst for nonexistence (*vibhava tanha*).

The desire to have pleasure and to avoid pain is a desire to have permanent pleasure. The insecurity of life is the inability to have permanent pleasure or permanent existence. In short it is the conflict between the blind emotional thirst for permanence and the reality of impermanence. The ending of insecurity is the ending of this blind unrealistic emotional reaction or thirst.

Therefore the **ending of insecurity** is described as the dispassionate eradication of the thirst without remainder; its renunciation, relinquishment and abandonment with no more hankering.

The **method of ending insecurity** is following the Supernormal Sublime Eight-fold Way, which has been already described.

The Inner Conflict

The conflict within is the conflict between ones emotional moods (*citta*) and ones rational faculty (*mano*). In addition to this conflict, another conflict arises between our conscience and the emotional impulses. Our conscience (*hiri-ottapa*) consists of habits cultivated in childhood during the course of childhood disciplining by adults. This conscience becomes an internal force that disciplines even adults. The conscience is a product of culture. This conscience that comes up as an emotion within begins to oppose the emotional impulses that seek pleasure.

This creates an inner conflict between opposing emotions. Our conscience seeks to be good. But this goodness is achieved only through a denial of emotional impulses.

When this happens, goodness is seen to be not good. Our thinking faculty takes the side of the emotional impulses by personalizing them and defending them. If, the individual did not have a strict upbringing, his conscience will not be very strong. If one's pleasure seeking emotions are also powerful, one might become a playboy (*kâmasukallikânuyôga*). Such an individual can even become a criminal, because it may lead one to crime, being carried away by emotions, and ignoring the conscience.

On the other hand, if the conscience is powerful, one may take the side of the conscience. If an individual has had a strict upbringing, this conscience will be very strong. Such an individual can become very inhibited in behaviour, and feel excessively self critical and guilty over the slightest lapse or error on his/her part. He can become over-critical of others too. This may even result in an ascetic life of self-denial and self-mortification, when the emotions are personalized but not gratified, and instead the mind and body is punished, thinking the fault is in the body or flesh. This is what the Buddha called *attakilamatânuyôga*.



It seems that we are trapped between the horns of a dilemma. If one is brought up strictly, one may turn into

an ascetic, if one is not, one may become a criminal. These conflicting emotions can drive an individual this way or the other depending on which side is stronger. If one cannot resolve the conflict one way or another, and it becomes unbearable, one may even become neurotic or psychotic, running away from reality into a false world of fantasy. This inner conflict becomes the cause of much unhappiness in our lives and it can even lead to suicide.

As mentioned earlier, these blind emotional reactions or thirst (*tanha*), which clashes with reality, is of three kinds:

- 1) The thirst for sensual pleasures (*kama tanha*)
- 2) The thirst for the presence of everything (*bhava tanha*)
- 3) The thirst for the absence of the unpleasant (*vibhava tanha*).

It is the urge for sensual pleasure that comes in conflict with society and the conscience, and can lead to mental illnesses such as neurosis and crime. The urge for existence of a “self” also comes in conflict with other individuals, social norms, and reality itself. This too can lead to neurosis and crime. The urge for non-existence resulting from anger toward others or oneself can lead to crime, wars, suicide, and psychosis. The details of how these urges lead to inner conflicts, neurosis, psychosis, and social conflicts, crime and even wars can be understood if one reads Freudian psychoanalytic literature. Some of the findings of Western psychology are a reiteration of the teachings of the Buddha.



The Solution

It is quite clear that the blind emotional impulse is what clashes with external reality and our reason, as well as with our conscience. It is therefore this blind impulse that is the cause of many of the troubles and tribulations in our lives. What is worse is that these troublesome, blind emotions motivate our actions. Our reason becomes a slave to these emotional motives, and even defends them rationally, through rationalization. It is these blind emotions that begin to dominate our lives.

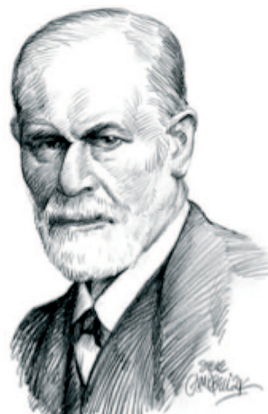
Is there a way of eliminating emotions? Can reason be made to dominate the individual rather than emotion? Can reason guide the emotions? Can we get our emotions to change direction? Some method must be found to bring about harmony within the personality. Modern psychologists are still struggling with this problem, while theistic religion is praying to God for help. Mankind continues to suffer due to an inability to gain control over emotions. To make things worse, mankind, in confusion, worships emotionality and excitement. They even confuse emotionality with humanity, thinking that emotion is necessary to be human. However, emotion is not what distinguishes the human being from the animal but the ability to reason.

Buddhism points the way to a humanistic solution, which has been successful for all those who take the technique seriously. The Buddha discovered this all-important technique twenty-five centuries ago. It can directly help only individuals, not societies as a whole, unless Buddhism is absorbed in to the society's culture. This Buddhist method unifies the personality by pointing to **a goal that does not come in conflict with reality**. This method is based on the principle that **the human mind is constantly seeking goals consciously or unconsciously**.

They may be good or bad, realistic or unrealistic. Seeking unrealistic goals produces conflict. The Buddhist method therefore, begins with consciously seeking a harmonious goal. This is to seek the new and special goal of **inner peace** (*ajjattasānti*), which is the **tranquility of mind**. How does this pursuit of tranquility resolve the conflict?

In order to understand this we must understand how our mind works. The well-known psychologist, Sigmund Freud, discovered an important fact in the modern times. Our mind is split into three parts, each part seeking a different goal. Our emotional impulses seek **pleasure**. Our conscience seeks to be **good**. Our reason, however, seeks to be **realistic**. He called these three parts the *id*, the *ego* and the *superego*, respectively. This was called the structural hypothesis. This split naturally results in conflict. The personality that is divided into three parts begins to pull in three different directions.

Freud saw this split as a split in the personality. The Buddha, however, saw this as four types of personalization. It is through the process of personalization that the idea of “personality” is born, which is the notion of an “individual person” or “self” (ego). To personalize is to think of ownership, or to consider something as, “this is mine.” What is considered to be “mine” then becomes a part of me. What is a “part of me” then turns out to be “me.” This happens emotionally rather than intellectually. Therefore it is an unconscious concept rather than a conscious one, and it is also irrational.



The four types of personalization presented by the Buddha were as follows:

- 1) Personalization of sensual desire
(*kama upadana*) – *id*
- 2) Personalization of views (*ditthi upadana*) – *ego*
- 3) Personalization of morals
(*silabbata upadana*) – *superego*
- 4) Personalization of the sense of self (*attavada upadana*) – **the sense of self**



The first three types of personalization resemble Freud's structural hypothesis of *id*, *ego*, and *superego* very closely. Freud saw them as three parts of the personality. The Buddha, however, did not see them as parts of a "personality." He only spoke of the process of "personalization," which produces the notion of a personality or person. Freud did speak of the notion of "self," as it is formed in the infant, by a process of personalization. But he did not see its connection to his structural hypothesis. When he used the term "*ego*," he did not mean a real existing entity called "*ego*" or "self." He saw the personality as an energy system or machine. The term "*ego*" was used to refer to the rational faculty probably following Descartes, "*cogito ergo sum*," (I think, therefore I am). He also needed to show that the *ego* was the conscious part of the personality, while the *id* (meaning "it") was the unconscious part.

The Buddha saw a fourth part of the process of personalization. It is the formation of the notion of "self." It is this that Freud did not see clearly. The Buddha also saw that **here lies the crux of the matter. It is because we personalize the**

emotions that we cannot get rid of them. If they are a part of my self, to give them up is to give up a part of myself, which I do not like to do. This was why Freud saw repression as an attempt to reject a part of the self. His effort during psychoanalysis was to restore what was thrown out into the unconscious. After bringing it into consciousness, he also attempted to gratify the emotional urge through sublimation, which means to gratify it in a socially acceptable way. Freud thought that the instincts could not be rooted out completely, they had to be expressed in some form or other. Freud also seems to have had the hope of eliminating the *id* altogether some day. Eric Fromm, the well-known Neo-Freudian, often quotes Freud saying, “Where there is the *id* there shall be the *ego*.” Yet Freud was not able to eliminate the *id* during his lifetime.

The Buddha found the way to eliminate the *id*, which was done by educating the *ego*. In other words, only educating the rational faculty can solve this problem, because it is the only part that can be educated. The emotional impulse is blind. So is the conscience. Only the rational faculty can think and reason out.

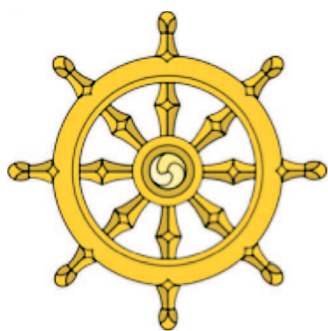
The first step the Buddha took in this direction was to point out that all parts of the personality, which had been already personalized during the formation of a personality, should be consciously depersonalized. This means, all parts of the personality should be seen as, “this is not mine.” In order to understand this, it is necessary to take seriously the principle that Freud called “psychic determinism.” This means that every thing that occurs within our mind does so only due to the presence of the necessary conditions. If the necessary conditions are absent, nothing can occur within us. In ancient times, people thought that the natural phenomena that occurred

in the world were due to the control of supernatural spirits. Today due to the progress of science people have begun to see that they are controlled by the presence of necessary conditions, and so the idea of gods and spirits were eliminated. This is the meaning of determinism. It was Freud among other modern psychologists who pointed out that the human mind is also controlled by conditions in the same way. So the idea of self or soul was eliminated. This means, there is no person to think, feel, or act within us. Later Freudians, however, pressed for the reinstatement of the notion of “self.” We read Paul Schilder (1886-1940) and Paul Federn (1872 - 1950), both Freudians who described the “ego” as the “omnipresent component of consciousness.” This sense of ego was further elaborated as “ego identity” by Erik Erikson in *Childhood and Society* (1950). Paul Schilder identified the “ego” not only as the “thinker” as Descartes did, but also as the “feeler,” “perceiver” and “actor.” He says, “The ego thinks, feels, perceives, has a past and present... every experience presupposes an ego” (Schilder, P. *Medical Psychology*, pp 290-300, 1953). The Buddha seems to have taken a position closer to Freud than to the later Freudians.

The next step taken by the Buddha was to show the way to depersonalize the parts of the personality, and to understand how things occur within the personality, in terms of the necessary conditions. Ancient people saw that birds could fly, but thought that human beings could not fly, because that was how God had created us. But as human thinking progressed, they observed the conditions necessary for flying to take place. So they invented the flying machine. In a similar way, if we learn how the human machine works, we can manipulate it to our advantage. Some believe we are born with a free will. Free will, by definition, is the freedom to make ones choices unconstrained by external or internal forces. We all know,

however, how difficult it is to make choices when under the power of our emotions, whether sexual, anger, fear, or worry. The Buddha pointed out that this free will has to be cultivated by proper practice. We are not born with it.

This is why in Buddhism there is no place for guilt feelings. We are not held responsible for what we do, because we are not born with a free will. It has to be acquired. This does not mean, however, that we may do what ever we like. We still have to know that wrong deeds have bad consequences for our selves as well as others. It is this knowledge that points to the practice of emotional control. This is like learning to drive a motor vehicle. If we drive without following proper rules, we can meet with an accident. The accident is not a punishment but a consequence. We will be considered guilty only by the police, but not by the hospital. The Buddha feels sympathy for the wrong doer and teaches him how to correct himself, just as a doctor does to a patient. The doctor does not punish the patient, as the law does, but treats the patient.



In the first sermon of the Buddha, called the “Revolution of The Wheel of Experience” (*dhamma cakka pavattana sutta*), the Buddha states, “There are two extreme ways of living that should be avoided: (1) devotion to self indulgence (*kamasukallikanuyoga*), and (2) devotion to self denial (*attakilamatanuyoga*). Avoiding these two extremes I have awakened to a medial way, which provides, vision, provides knowledge, leads to inner peace, super-knowledge, and the

imperturbable serenity, NIBBANA.” This medial way was the Supernormal Sublime Eight-fold Way described earlier.

4. The Value of Tranquility

It is interesting to note that Freud recognized that the real purpose of the *id* is to release the tension created by the emotional excitement. In other words, it wants to return to the original state of relaxation that it started with. If this is so, what the



id wants is a state of relaxation and calm, not mere pleasure, which is sensual stimulation and excitement. If we make our goal tranquility, the *id* will therefore be satisfied.

When, on the other hand, we consider the interest of the *ego*, we see that what the *ego* wants is to act realistically for the benefit of the whole organism and even society at large, without interference from the *id*. This too is achieved when the goal becomes tranquility. Therefore the *ego* is satisfied with tranquility.

When we consider the purpose of the *superego*, we find that what it wants is to follow the rules of social convention. What interferes with this again is the *id*, which seeks pleasure. If the goal becomes tranquility, the purpose of the *superego* is also served. Therefore the *superego* is satisfied with the goal of tranquility.

When all the parts of the personality are satisfied, the conflict comes to an end. Mental health ensues. The one goal

that brings peace to the individual personality as well as the world at large is the sure and universal remedy, TRANQUILITY. It was in this way that the conflict was resolved by the Buddha. The Buddha did recognize the problem pointed out by Freud but did not make the mistake made by Freud in personalizing the *id*, *ego*, and *super ego*. He also saw the value of tranquility in satisfying all three parts of the structural hypothesis. Avoiding the two extremes of emotional expression and emotional suppression or repression, he found the medial way that satisfies every part of the personality and resolves all conflicts.

It is important to understand that the true happiness is tranquility. One should note that emotional excitement, which is accompanied by tension, is not a state of comfort or pleasure. It is only the release of tension, or the state of relaxation, that is comfortable. Satisfying desire is experienced as pleasant only because of this release of tension involved in it. This is why Freud defined pleasure as the release of tension. The presence of any emotion like anger, fear, or even sexual excitement is unpleasant and uncomfortable, because it is accompanied by tension. It is to remove this discomfort, and to obtain the comfort of relaxation that we seek the satisfaction of our desires. If, on the other hand, we consciously seek tranquility and relaxation, which is the goal of the emotional impulse, we will be directly attaining pleasure and happiness, without having to become tensed and release the tension to obtain comfort.

This is exactly what we do when we are engaged in sports. We become tensed first and then we release tension. This release of tension is the satisfaction we get from all games not only in sports. When we loose a match, we become tensed, but our tension is not released. This makes us angry and worried,

but we can do nothing about it. This is how we become stressed out. Stress is unreleased tension.

Tranquility is also the way to goodness. The emotional impulse, which comes into conflict with society and good principles, is what is called evil. Sexual love, parental love and brotherly love are emotions, and are in essence merely attachments and not love. Contrary to popular opinion in the West, selfless concern for others is not an emotion. Selfless love, however, is not an emotion. All emotions are self-centered, and therefore interfere with true selfless love. This means that true love is possible only in a tranquil state of mind. If goodness is love, then goodness is a state of tranquility. In other words, the tranquilization of these emotional impulses is what makes one good. This means that the aim of our sense of goodness is also achieved by seeking tranquility.

Tranquility brings us into harmony with reality, because tranquility helps us to think more clearly. Tranquility eliminates the pleasure-seeking emotional impulses that come into conflict with our thinking and reality itself. Tranquility is also rational because it helps rational thinking. It is tranquility that makes rational thought possible. The aim of rational thought is to be in harmony with reality. Therefore, harmony with external reality, as well as with our reason, is achieved through the cultivation of inner tranquility. Despite the great genius of Sigmund Freud, however, he did not see the unifying potential of the goal of tranquility, which the Buddha saw.

The Buddha called this tranquility that unifies the mind – NIRVANA. Writers have mystified NIRVANA, though it has a very simple meaning – **imperturbability** (*Nir* = non; *vāna* = shaking) or **freedom from emotional turbulence** (*akuppa ceto vimutti*). A person who has reached this goal is called

upasānta (one who is peaceful within) or *sānta* (peaceful one). It is interesting to note that the term “saint” in English seems to be a derivative of “*sānta*.” This term “*sānta*” is still used as the Spanish equivalent for the term saint – “*santo*.”

This **inner peace**, or **imperturbable serenity**, is regarded, in Buddhism, as the **Greatest Good** and having the greatest value in the world, although the modern world wedded to materialism and excitement finds little value in it. No wonder stress has become one of the most serious problems today.

Essence of Humanity

The idea that tranquility eliminates emotions may come as a surprise to those who believe that emotion is the essence of humanity. In Eastern belief it is quite the contrary; emotion is seen as the animal nature within man. What is special about being human is the ability to remain tranquil and act rationally. A Sanskrit poet expresses this idea thus:

*Eating, sleeping, fear and sex
Common are they to man and beast
Thought complex is special to man
When low in thought, man is a beast.*



This idea is confirmed by modern biological research too. According to modern biology, the difference between the ape and the human being is that, the ape is passively reacting to the environment, whereas, man is able to delay the reaction, to get sufficient time, to decide which response to make in a given situation and then make the chosen response. Undoubtedly, “delaying the reaction,” means staying calm before “deciding the right response.” In other words, the human being has the potential to stay calm and think rationally, where as the other

animals are incapable of doing so, as they get excited easily. Yet how many human beings are really capable of acting rationally when emotionally excited?

Normally people are not always calm and rational, and it is this “normal” state of excitability and lack of emotional control that we often mistake for the essence of human nature. The Buddha points out that this ability to remain calm is only a human potential to be developed. This means, true humanity is an unrealized potential. We are not fully human until we have learned to be calm and rational. Eric Fromm, in his book, *Psychoanalysis and religion* draws attention to this fact. This calmness and rationality is also the essence of emotional maturity. The adult is generally calmer than the child.

The practice of the Buddhist life, in essence, is the cultivation of this human potential and the gaining of emotional maturity. The end result of the Buddhist practice is to overcome our animal nature, and to enter the fully human state. In other words, man becomes fully human by living in the way taught by the Buddha. Although this fully human state is “not quite a normal one,” it cannot be called “abnormal.” Instead, the Buddha described it as “supernormal” (*ariya*) or “divine” (*brahma cariya*). This is the meaning of “divinity” in Buddhism. The aim of Buddhism is to bring the human being to a “supernormal” or “divine” state. This transcendence of the ordinary human state, is seen by the Buddha as the true meaning of “union with God,” spoken of in theistic religions.

To unite with God is to become God. This is why the Buddha and his perfected disciples are called “God Become” (*brahma bhuto*). It is a gross error to say that the Buddha is an ordinary human being. The Buddha is, by definition, one who has transcended the human state, in attaining the state of

unshakable imperturbability, NIRVANA. He is also believed by “all Buddhists” (not only Mahayanists) to be Omniscient (*sabbannu*), Omni-benevolent (*mahakaruniko*), and spiritually perfect (*arahan*).

It may be surprising to some scholars to find here that these attributes of the Buddha seem to be the same as that of God in theistic religions, except for one. The missing attribute is Omnipotence. In Buddhism, Omnipotence is attributed to Mara (*vasavatti mara*) the Devil, who is a personification of all that is evil in the world. Because the Buddha is supposed to have defeated Mara, the Buddha is also called the Dispeller of Mara (*maranudo*).

This puzzling situation could be interpreted by some as an attempt to deify the Buddha, as some scholars have already done. This is quite a misunderstanding. It is important to understand the Buddhist way of thinking fully, before one can draw such conclusions. What all this means is that Buddhism is not an atheistic religion, as it is popularly known. It only has a different way of looking at the concept of God. This different way is the humanistic way. Buddhism is neither theistic nor atheistic, but humanistic. Buddhism offers a humanistic definition of God.

“God,” for the Buddhist, is a human concept. This means that God did not make man in his own image, but man made God in his own image. There is nothing wrong or funny about this. Man made God for a useful and worthy purpose. **God is the human ideal of perfection that human beings conceive and struggle to realize through the practice of religion.** It is very rarely that a person realizes this high ideal of perfection, but when a human being does realize this ideal, he is called an Awakened One (*Buddha*). In theistic religion, we hear of God

becoming man, Christ – the anthropomorphic God. In the same vein, we hear in humanistic Buddhism of man becoming God – the “theopsychic” man, or “God-become” (*brahmabhuto*). All theistic religions talk about uniting with God. What is “uniting with God” other than “becoming God?” When one unites with God, one loses one's identity, just as the river that enters the ocean and loses its identity.

Religion, for the Buddhist, is not an institution that came down from Heaven to Earth, carrying the message of the Creator. It is an institution that has grown up on earth to satisfy a human need, to solve a human problem, which is the “problem of existence.” This problem of existence is that every one who is born has to grow old and die. Everything we are attached to is subject to change and separation. All pleasure is impermanent. In spite of this, all animals, plants, and human beings are struggling and competing to exist, they fight with one another to keep their temporary lives and to enjoy impermanent pleasure. The purpose of all religions is to solve this problem of unhappiness and insecurity in life. This is why all religions seek eternal life and eternal happiness. Theistic religions pray to an Almighty God for help. Humanistic Buddhism takes refuge in the Wisdom of the Buddha who transcended all human weaknesses and became Divine.

The Buddha offered a solution to mankind. That is to fully understand this human predicament. In simple terms, it is to understand what is called life. What we call life is a dynamic biochemical process. Therefore life is an activity, not an entity that exists. Existence is a static concept, while life is a dynamic process of activity. Therefore life can continue as a process but cannot exist. Continuity is an ever-changing process like a flame. It can have a beginning and an end, but in between

is change. It is this misunderstanding about life as existence that has created the problem.

Life is not as we want. We are born without knowing why. We don't know why we are born in a certain country, into a certain race, with a certain colour, with certain bodily features, with certain mental features. Often we don't like the way we are born. We cannot do anything about it. After being born we grow up. Then we begin to grow old. We don't like to grow old, to fall sick or to die. We want to remain young always and live without sickness forever. How many people have enough money to buy anything they want? How many are really happy about their situation?

We all want to exist, but life is not an existence. Life is like a wave. A wave is only a motion, not an existence. If life is not an existence, we do not exist. If we don't exist, we do not grow old or die. Then why do we think we exist? Is it because of our emotions? Even if we are fully convinced rationally that we don't exist, we still feel we exist. Existence is a feeling rather than a rational concept.

Because of feelings we also identify ourselves with the body, the feelings, the sensations, the perceptions, and the consciousness itself. We personalize these parts of our experience. We regard them as "mine" or "myself." Only when we are able to relax fully, and calmly depersonalize all experience, we will be free of the feeling of existence. With that comes all our suffering, and the problem of existence to an end. This is the transcendence of ordinary human nature, or awakening from the dream of existence. Yet it is easily said than done. This needs much relaxation and calmness through meditation.

The Philosophy of Tranquility

It is possible for the philosophy of tranquility to be misunderstood as the “philosophy of the turnip,” which is the philosophy of inactivity or apathy. This, however, is not what is meant here. Tranquility is not inactivity. Tranquility can be very active. **Tranquility is really the quieting of the emotions, not the stopping of action.** It is a state that makes it possible to think clearly, and respond to a situation rationally, instead of reacting emotionally. To cultivate tranquility is to **learn to stop reacting and to start responding.**

It is important to learn to distinguish between a **reaction** and a **response**. A reaction is emotional, irrational, blind. A response, on the other hand, is calm, deliberate, rational, and intelligent. It is important to note that a response is a calm well thought out conscious action, and not an emotional, excited unconscious reaction. A reaction is determined, conditioned, and dependent on external and internal forces, whereas a response is a conscious action, which is determined, and conditioned, but consciously directed, and not dependent on external forces. It is natural, and intelligent, but not emotional.

A response is also a free action, but a reaction is not free. Whenever we speak of freedom of will or action, we are not referring to emotional reactions, but to rational responses. When we react emotionally, we have no freedom to will or to act. We are not really born with a free will; freedom of will is something to be cultivated and developed through practice. This is why one is never born a Buddhist. A true Buddhist is a responsible person, who has learned to respond instead of react. Therefore to become a true Buddhist, one has to learn to stop reacting and start responding. This means, Buddhism

is the development of freedom of will, by learning to act, instead of reacting to situations.

Therefore, the philosophy of tranquility is not inaction. It is the avoidance of the two extremes: reaction and inaction. It takes the intermediate path between these extremes, which is calm and rational action, or response. The pursuit of tranquility, therefore, not only unifies the whole personality and brings it to a harmonious state internally as well as externally, it also brings about success and fulfillment due to rational action.

Our Original State



Although we speak of the return to tranquility as if it were something to be sought outside, tranquility is something to be found within us. Tranquility is in fact our original state. From an original natural state of tranquility, we have become agitated and excited. What we need to do is to return to our original state of tranquility or equilibrium.

All emotional excitements are agitations of the mind. Excitement is a reaction to sensory stimulation. This excitement also produces tension in the muscles of the body, which is released in action to gratify emotion. Recurring excitement and tension due to the continuous stimulation of the senses,

results not only in discomfort due to tension, it can also lead to psychosomatic disease and the hastening of the aging process. All this is a departure from the original state of tranquility.

All this agitation can be seen as a loss of balance or equilibrium, and tranquility as a return to the state of equilibrium. This return to equilibrium may be compared to the behaviour of a balanced or a round-bottom-doll, which when toppled returns to its original upright state and gradually comes to a standstill. The pursuit of tranquility is the effort to return to the original state of stillness by regaining equilibrium.

Tranquility, therefore, is the most natural state. To pursue tranquility is to return to the natural state. This means that agitation, tension, anxiety and worry are unnatural states, whereas tranquility accompanied by happiness and comfort is the truly natural state.

This means that becoming a Buddhist is the most natural thing that can happen to an individual. It happens, however, only with the arising of the harmonious perspective. The harmonious perspective is understanding the problem of life, which is the conflict between emotions on the one hand, and reason, external and internal reality and conscience on the other. It is, in other words, the understanding of the importance of seeking tranquility. When this special perspective arises in the mind, the right sense of values arises too. This gives a new direction to life. Then our life is automatically reorganized to reach the harmonious goal of inner tranquility, NIRVANA. In this way, a complete transformation of the personality takes place. The character of the individual is changed. Mental health and happiness is gained. All this happens naturally with the arising of the harmonious perspective.

Buddhism is Humanistic

Although Buddhism does not accept the belief in a creator, it is neither atheistic nor agnostic. Buddhism does have a concept of god, but it has its own definition of God and religion. Some writers, who consider Buddhism to be atheistic, call it a philosophy rather than a religion because to them religion is the belief in a supernatural Creator. Buddhism, however, is a humanistic religion that defines religion and God in a humanistic way, which is quite different from the definition in theistic thinking. Religion as understood in Buddhism is a consciously executed process of human psychological evolution, and God is the state of human perfection.

To the Buddhist, religion is not centered on the concept of a Creator and his problems; but it is centered on the concept of the human being and his problems. Religion is not a revelation of a Creator; it is a practice of the human being. Religion is not something that has come down from heaven to fulfill a divine purpose, but something that has grown up on earth to satisfy a human need, to solve a human problem. To the Buddhist, man was not created by God; to him, God was created by man, to fulfill his need for emotional stability.

“God,” to the Buddhist, is a human concept, is the ideal of human perfection which man conceives and struggles to realize through the practice of religion. The practice of religion is not obedience to the commandments of a Creator; it is a conscious human effort to solve the human problem of existence, through the process of growth and evolution of the human consciousness. This evolution results in a transformation of the individual and the development of a perfect human being who has transcended all human weaknesses. A perfect being who has transcended the human state is called Buddha, “the Awakened

One” or “God-become” (*brahma bhuto*). Man realizes the ideal of perfection in becoming a Buddha. This Buddha is God, the ideal of perfection realized. God, to the Buddhist is not the Creator of the world but the destroyer of the illusion (*maya*) of self and the world. This means that the world is a creation of the human mind, through the process of perception and conception. The Buddha sees through this process and destroys the illusion of self and the world.

Seen in another way, the human being at birth is part animal and part human. The animal part consists of the emotions and the human part is the ability to reason. In religious symbolism, the animal part is called the “devil,” and the human part is called the “divine” nature within. The ordinary human being is a transitional stage between animal and God. He possesses both animal and divine qualities. Both god and devil are within him. When the animal nature has been completely transcended, man becomes God, the Buddha.

God of the Buddhist

To say that the Buddha is a human being is a gross inaccuracy, because the Buddha by definition is one who has transcended the human state. The “Buddha” may be compared and contrasted with the living, existing God of theistic religion. Of course the Buddha is not a supernatural being, a Creator, a controller, a judge, nor an infinite soul transcendent or immanent.



The Buddha may, however, be described as a supernormal or superhuman being (*uttari manussa*) whose essence is not

existence (*bhava niruddha*). This is in contrast to the theistic concept that the essence of God is his “existence.” The Buddha is one who has ceased to live as a person even while the body is living. This does not mean that the Buddha is not real. On the contrary, he has become one with the reality of impersonality. He has become a “non-person.” The Buddha is called the *Thathagata*, which means, the one who has transcended the ordinary human experience of “personality” (*atta*). This means he has become absolutely “selfless” as he does not think “I” or “mine.” He is also the embodiment of goodness (*dhamma kayo*) and the embodiment of God (*brahma kayo*). It should be noted that this “anthropomorphic God” of Buddhism is not “God become man” as Christ is in Christianity is believed to be, but “man become God (*brahma bhuto*).” He is not God descended to the human state, but man ascended to the divine state. He is not God with a human body but man with a divine mind. He may, therefore, be more appropriately called the “theopsychic man.”

It is not incorrect to say that the Buddha is the God of the Buddhist. This idea is not new to Buddhist thought, even to that of *Theravada*. The Buddha has been called the “god of gods” (*devatideva*) and “God by purity” (*visuddhi deva*). He has also been called the greatest in the three worlds, heaven, hell and earth (*tiloka agga*). All Buddhists including *Theravada* Buddhists believe that the Buddha is the most supreme of all beings. He is the Breaker of Bonds (*arahat*), Fully Awakened (*samma sambuddho*), Knower of All (*sabbannu*), Most Powerful (*vasavatti*), Attained to Goodness (*sugato*), Penetrator of the World (*loka vidhu*), Endowed with Conscious Response (*vijja carana sampanno*), and Saviour of the World (*loka natha*). This Buddhist concept of Buddha has much in common with the theistic concept of God, though it is not identical with it.

5. Harmonious Disposition or Goal Orientation

Harmonious disposition or aspiration takes the form of devotion in Buddhism. After the formal devotional exercises that purify the mind, it is customary for Buddhists to make a conscious verbal and mental aspiration to attain NIRVANA.

Aspiration is the visualization of the goal of NIRVANA in appreciation of it. This visualization of the goal as something that is good, pleasant and real arouses the desire for it. The goal is visualized in concrete form as the serene figure of the Buddha. The appreciation is expressed physically in the act of obeisance and in the offerings, and verbally in the recitations.

This is the turning of interest in the direction of the new goal, the reorientation of the mind. It may also be understood as programming the mind to attain the goal, in accordance with psycho-cybernetic principles. This programming is done through the imagination.

Let us further understand what reorientation means, using an example:

Magnetizing Your Life

Do you know how a piece of iron is magnetized? An ordinary piece of iron contains tiny magnets inside turned in different directions. This is why it has no magnetism.

But if you stroke this piece of iron with a magnet, those tiny magnets begin to turn in one direction. Then it becomes a magnet that attracts

other pieces of iron. In the same way, your mind is filled with thoughts that seek different goals, which are very often in conflict. You do not have one goal in your mind. This is why your life cannot progress in any one direction.

You can change your life by clearing your mind of these chaotic thoughts and directing all thoughts toward one goal that does not clash with reality. Then your life gets organized to seek this one-goal, and your life becomes magnetized like a piece of iron to attract success. The most realistic goal to pursue is **TRANQUILITY.**

Buddhist worship is not, as some intellectuals think, a meaningless ritual or ceremony practiced by less intellectual individuals. It can become so, however, only if done without understanding. Worship is in fact a very meaningful psychological exercise, essential in becoming a Buddhist.

Worship and Prayer

Buddhists do not pray to the Buddha but worship the Buddha. Prayer is adoration, confession, supplication or thanks giving. Worship (worth + ship), on the other hand, is to show great respect, reverence, or admiration; it is to highly esteem or hold in high regard. It is to recognize the greatness or superiority of the Buddha who represents the ideal of



perfection in concrete form. This worship is a psychological exercise to develop “*saddha*” (appreciation of goodness), the Buddhist sense of values, which gives a new direction to life.

The purpose of Buddhist worship is to get one moving in the right direction. The idea is that we move in the direction of what we consider is superior, worthy or worthwhile. We become like the person we admire, appreciate and constantly visualize as worthy.

Buddhist worship is a kind of hero worship, which is to look upon some person with great admiration. If we admire or worship the right kind of heroes we move in the right direction. If we worship and admire criminals, we tend to become criminals ourselves. If we worship and admire saints, on the other hand, we tend to become saints ourselves. This is why there is value in reading the biographies of great men. Buddhists read the biography of the Buddha for inspiration. The basic principle is “we become what we worship.” We become the ideal we worship. Buddhists are not “idol” worshippers but “ideal” worshippers.

This worship is, therefore, a psychological exercise to re-orient the mind toward the new goal. It is meditation at the devotional level. Buddhist worship is the harmonious aspiration to attain the state of perfection called Buddha.

Buddhist worship consists of obeisance, offerings, recitations, silent meditation, sharing of goodness and aspiration. Each part of this worship has a very important psychological meaning and purpose.

The Obeisance

The bow or obeisance is an important practice, which helps cultivate humility and begins the initiate on the path. The bow or prostration is a conscious recognition of the greatness of the state of



Buddha and the admission of ones own inferiority in relation to that state. This humbling of oneself before the Buddha not only helps cultivate humility but also makes one aware of ones position on the ladder of progress.

This is not a morbid dwelling on ones state of inferiority; it is the healthy admiration and appreciation of the superiority of the state of goodness, happiness and realism attained by the Buddha. This recognition of the greatness of the attainment of the Buddha gives us hope and self-confidence to work toward the transcendence of our state of inadequacy and recognizes the future possibilities. It spurs one towards the superior state, the development of human potential.

Buddhists do not look upon themselves as sinners and helpless weaklings before a superior, all-powerful, supernatural being who can never be equaled by anyone. They believe that every man can reach the state of perfection reached by the Buddha. The bow is a recognition and appreciation of the state of perfection reached by the Buddha and an aspiration to attain that same state.

The bow is the physical expression of the mental state of reverential appreciation of the Buddha's goodness. It helps cultivate this feeling of appreciation, which is called

“*saddha*.” It was William James who said, “Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling which is not.” If we understand this psychological principle, we understand how the bow can help cultivate “*saddha*” within us. By acting out “*saddha*” in the bow, we produce the feeling of *saddha* within us. This “*saddha*” or reverential appreciation is what initiates the movement toward the goal.

The various kinds of offerings made to the Buddha are also symbolic expressions of the feeling of appreciation (*saddha*). The offering of light, which symbolizes wisdom, is a way of honouring the enlightenment of the Buddha. The offering of incense, which symbolizes virtue, is to honour the Buddha’s virtues. Flowers represent the pleasures of the world, which are transient, and their offering represents the sacrifice of the worldliness in favour of the inner peace of NIRVANA. The offering of food represents our show of gratitude to the Buddha for giving us his teaching, even though what we give is not worth even a millionth part of what he gave us, the miracle of the Dhamma. These offerings are not made to please the Buddha or to receive favours from the Buddha. They all help develop “*saddha*,” or appreciation of the greatness of the Buddha.

All other parts of the worship such as recitations and meditation also help cultivate “*saddha*.” Recitations or chants are only verbal expressions of ones appreciation of the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. Meditations are mental expressions of ones appreciation. The sharing of merits and aspiration are really practices consequential to appreciation. Because we appreciate the goal of perfection, our mind is purified by that thought, and we share this purity with others who join us. We

also aspire to reach the state of perfection because we appreciate it, and we encourage others to do the same.

The Use of Images

The use of images in Buddhist worship has been subject to criticism by those who think it is wrong to “bow down to brazen images.” These criticisms are based on ignorance. The image of the Buddha is only an external representation of an internal mental image. The external image helps us to produce the internal image and the feeling associated with it.

We all use images in our lives quite unconsciously, and sometimes to our disadvantage. Even those who think they can do without images cannot help being influenced by them. The Chinese say, “One picture is worth ten thousand words.” Modern advertisers know this very well and use images to their advantage. Television has become the most powerful of mass media today because of the power of images over the human mind. Buddhists use images to their advantage.

It is quite natural for human beings to use images. Why are great national monuments and statues built? Why do people pay thousands of dollars for paintings and sculpture? Why do people buy cameras? What is a photograph if not an image? If images were not of any value, could the camera industry be so prosperous today? Why do lovers treasure photographs of their sweethearts if an image has no meaning for them? Buddhists are not so naive as to think that statues have life in them. They only use them as symbols. Statues, like any sculpture, painting or music, express certain ideas. Critics themselves use symbols all the time when they are speaking, writing, or even thinking. They too worship images when they consciously or unconsciously worship heroes and magnates of various kinds.

When our lives have been reoriented through harmonious aspiration and the cultivation of “*saddha*,” the reverential appreciation of the goal of perfection of human nature, our speech, action and lifestyle fall in line with this goal and our life begins to move in the direction of this goal. **When this happens, we have become Buddhists.** It is clear how important it is to cultivate “*saddha*,” the harmonious aspiration. **We become Buddhists by gaining “*saddha*,”** but we gain “*saddha*” only when we have acquired the harmonious perspective.

6. Harmonious Behaviour

Harmonious aspiration leads to harmonious speech, action, and lifestyle, which constitute harmonious behaviour. This new harmonious behaviour is called “*sila*.” “*Sila*” is not mere self-restraint or discipline. No discipline is needed if our direction in life has been changed. We then go in the chosen direction because we want to go, not because of any external compulsion. Once we get started in this new direction, discipline and restraint would be needed only to stop us from going or to change direction. Even discipline would not be successful in changing our new habit of behaviour until we change our goal again. What we need is not discipline but re-orientation. However, this goal or new direction, which is based on understanding cannot be changed, because understanding cannot be undone.

Harmonious behaviour, which is also called “supernormal behaviour” (*ariya sila*), is said to be just the maintenance of calm or equilibrium (*samadhi samvattanikam*). It is not behaviour assumed or imposed from outside (*aparamattam*).

It is the natural behaviour of a calm person. This behaviour is simply the result of acting from a centre of calm.

Assumed behaviour imposed from outside is called “*silabbataparamasa*” in Buddhism. This *Pali* word is commonly mistranslated as “attachment to rites and rituals.” This is not correct.

The word “*sila*” refers to the negative or omission aspect of behaviour; “*bata*” refers to the positive or commission aspect, and “*paramasa*” means regarding something as foreign, or as an imposition from outside (*parato amasati*). The meaning has nothing at all to do with rites and rituals. It can only mean the alienation of disciplinary principles, which is often associated with shame and fear. It represents a kind of morality based on conformity to a social or religious standard of behaviour, or obedience to commandments or rules given from outside. It is not genuine goodness, which has to come from within. It is conformity to external standards of behaviour.

Behaviour imposed on us from outside is not something that we really want to do. It is the morality of the prisoner, the slave or the patient. It is like trying to stop drinking or smoking because the public forces us to do so, or because the doctor wants us to do so. It is also like trying to follow commandments or precepts because God said so, or the Buddha said so, or through fear of punishment. What the Buddhist avoids is **not rites and rituals but behaviour that is a foreign imposition** (*silabbata paramasa*).

What is considered foreign in Buddhism is not goodness but evil. “The mind, oh disciples, is naturally pure. It is polluted by adventitious impurities,” said the Buddha. Therefore, an enlightened Buddhist would never picture himself as a sinner because this would produce a bad self-image and would prevent

him from seeking purity. If he begins to picture himself as a sinner, he is personalizing himself as a sinner. This means to get rid of sin is to get rid of himself, which he will never want to do. He should picture himself as a naturally good and calm person, who might, once in a way, through foreign influences lose his equilibrium temporarily. Even this could be prevented by the practice of constant reflexive watchfulness (*samma sati*).

Good behaviour can be something positive. It is not merely refraining from bad behaviour. It is responsible behaviour. It means becoming interested in others. It is the ability to consider others as important as one-self. It is to be able to share things with others and care for others. It is to treat others as a mother would treat her children without making any distinction between oneself and others. It is to include all beings within one's interest, without excluding anyone for reasons such as: they are bad, ugly, or different. It is to be able to forgive other's faults. It is to be able to treat every one equally without discrimination. This is responsible behaviour that is unemotional and rational. Emotions are self-centred and therefore interfere with this kind of responsible behaviour. If this responsibility is called love, then this selfless love (*metta*) is not an emotion.

In Buddhism, good behaviour is described in two forms: as doings or commissions (*câritra*) and not doings or omissions (*vâritra*). Under commissions come self-sacrifice (*câga*) or generosity (*dâna*), which is expressed today as caring and sharing. Under omissions come the avoidance of bad conduct (*sila*). It is really the avoidance of emotional behaviour. "câga" or "dâna," on the other hand, is giving without selfish motives or emotions. It is rational and responsible behaviour, which is not emotional. Good behaviour therefore, is unemotional, rational and responsible behaviour.

The five principles of behaviour (*panca sila*) for the beginner was described by the Buddha as follows:

- 1) Not finding satisfaction in disrespecting living beings
- 2) Not finding satisfaction in taking others property, unless freely given
- 3) Not finding satisfaction in sexual infidelity
- 4) Not finding satisfaction in discourteous speech
- 5) Not finding satisfaction in using inebriating drugs.

It is customary for a beginner, who takes refuge in the **Triple Refuge** – the **Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha** – to formally accept these training principles of behaviour, before a member of the Sangha, and begin to abide by them conscientiously. Thereafter, he/she may recite them during worship as a meditation.

The Social Attitude

The true Buddhist is a social person. This is because human beings are naturally social and responsible when they act calmly and rationally unless disturbed by self-centered emotions. It is only when we are emotionally excited that we become selfish, antisocial and mean. Actually, there is no valid reason to be antisocial if we realize that others' lives are as important as ours. It is only when we are blinded by emotions that we lose sight of this reality and become selfish and antisocial.

When we are rational, we also realize that it is advantageous, even from a selfish point of view, to be social. If we are kind to others, others will be kind to us. This is especially helpful when we are dealing with emotional people. If we make people calm and happy, they will begin to treat us responsibly

and well, because calmness, happiness and responsible behaviour go together. Mankind is helped and protected by social exchange and sharing of resources. Society helps and protects those who are considered good and useful to society. On the other hand, those who are bad are punished. Therefore it is rational to be social and concerned about others even from a selfish standpoint. This means that a person who acts rationally has no reason to be antisocial. Therefore, rational behaviour is social behaviour, because it helps oneself as well as others.

One who acts rationally does not seek help in supernatural powers. Instead of seeking the support of one God, or several gods, he seeks the support of society through social exchange. By doing his duty to others, others protect him. This is the humanistic way of practicing religion. This kind of religion is the cultivation of faith in social living, rather than faith in one God or many gods. The Buddhist has faith in mankind and human resources, rather than in gods. The Buddhist cultivates a broad mind that is interested in the welfare of all beings. His society consists not only of human beings but even animals; in fact, his society includes all beings without exception.

The Buddhist having given up praying to gods worships the Buddha and practices self-reliance and the social attitude. He stops the futile effort to satisfy, preserve and expand a self, and instead extends his interest to all beings and loses his self in the interest in all beings. As a responsible citizen, he performs his duty toward the six divisions of his social environment: parents, teachers, family, friends, clergy and employees. They in turn do their duties toward him.

Buddhism has nothing against the Buddhist laity earning money. The important question, however, is “what do they do with their hard earned money?” The Buddha teaches the laity

how to gain worldly success. One should make effort to earn money by learning the necessary skills. One should protect ones hard-earned wealth. One should associate with good friends who help one, protect one, and encourage one to move in the right direction in life. One should live according to ones means. One part of ones earnings should be used for daily expenses. A second larger part of it should be invested, and a third part should be saved for emergencies.

Earning money only to maintain oneself is not selfish. It is a kind of service; for, if one does not earn money, one becomes a burden on others. If one does earn sufficient money, one relieves others of this burden. If one has excess earnings, one could help ones parents, relatives, family, friends, neighbors, and even the state with taxes. He can help departed relatives too by performing meritorious deeds and sharing merits. Buddhists have the custom of doing charitable actions and making a wish such as, “May through the power of the merits of this act, my departed relatives find happiness.”

Developing the Mind

Since good behaviour depends on a good state of mind, one should cultivate a good state of mind in order to be good. The cultivation of a good state of mind is what is called meditation in



Buddhism. Meditation becomes a natural thing when ones mind is oriented towards the goal of Tranquility. A good state of mind, which is essentially a tranquil mind, is described as the “Four Divine Dwellings.”

The cultivation of the “Divine Dwelling” (*brahmavihara*), is the cultivation of a selfless concern for others. The divine dwelling is the fourfold mental state of selflessness. It comprises:

- METTA Extension of the limitless concern for the welfare of all beings through out the universe, and even other unknown worlds and the beings in them.
- KARUNA The deep empathetic concern for the welfare of all beings, considering others sorrows and happiness as equal to ones own, making no distinction between oneself and others.
- MUDITA As Karuna progresses and deepens, ones self-consciousness disappears in the interest in all beings, just as a river falls into the ocean and loses its identity. This selflessness takes away all worries and anxieties that are self-centered. The result is the happiness of selflessness called *mudita*.
- UPEKKHA Because *mudita* is a tranquil state of happiness, unlike the common worldly happiness that is an excitement, *mudita* brings the mind to a calm composed state of *samadhi*, where the attention is focused within (*satipatthâna*). When the attention is focused within, one is not concerned with the changing vicissitudes of life, and instead becomes aware of the experience within (introspection = *upekkhâ*). This objective introspection is to view all subjective experiences objectively, without personalizing or identifying with them. This objective introspection (*upekkha*) leads one to become aware of the subjective process

of perception, rather than the object perceived (apperception = *abhiññâ*).

PAÑÑÂ

With the appearance of **apperception** (*abhiññâ*) one begins to go through a **paradigm shift**, which is a change from an awareness of existence to an awareness of experience (*paññâ*). Here a distinction is made between **existence** and **experience**. The feeling of existence of a “self” is due to **personalization** of the subjective experience. The feeling of existence of the world is due to **alienation** of the objective experience. The paradigm shift is to realize that the existence of a **self** and a **world** is in fact a **conceptual fallacy** or delusion created by personalization and alienation. When this is realized, the paradigm shift occurs from existence to experience, which frees one from the notion of existence (*vimutti*). This freedom from the notion of existence, is the awakening from the dream of existence (*samma sambodhi*), which is freedom from death (*amata*) and freedom from all **suffering** (*dukkha*). This freedom from suffering is the **freedom from the insecurity of life** (*Nirvâna*). **Nirvana** is generally understood as an eternal state of bliss. This is not so. Nirvana is in fact only a state of **undisturbed tranquility of mind**, based on the **absence** of the notion of **existence**, and therefore of the notion of **death**, and therefore the absence of the **insecurity of life**.

This “Divine Dwelling” or universal benevolence is cultivated as a meditation by practicing the continuous production of benevolent feelings within; and, starting with

oneself, spreading these feelings throughout the universe. It is extending ones field of interest beyond oneself to include all beings, gradually expanding outward in concentric circular boundaries in space, toward infinity.

This meditation when cultivated is very beneficial. It can lead to the improvement of ones relationships, ones happiness, self-control and intelligence. It also brings about emotional maturity and finally brings one nearer to the goal of NIRVANA. This is the *summum bonum* of Buddhism.

Tranquility is not in opposition with an interest in others. In fact it is the tranquil mind that can become interested in others for others sake. The mind that is not tranquil is self-absorbed and not able to become interested in others. Selfless love is not an emotional excitement, as some believe because all emotions are self-centered. Selflessness cannot therefore be an emotion. It can only be seen as the state of tranquility.

This is why the cultivation of tranquility in meditation cannot make a person apathetic or indifferent. Tranquility can only result in empathy, which is the ability to enter into another person's feelings as if they were ones own. This is what makes a person good.

Tranquility lays the foundation for a selfless interest in others, yet it also lays the foundation for detachment. Attachment is self-centered and is an emotion. Attachment is what many people call love. This kind of love disappears when the mind is tranquil, but this is not a matter for concern because attachment is what prevents selfless love. If we become attached to some person or thing, we tend to be protective and possessive, and thus we become antagonistic toward others who try to take that person away from us. Therefore, detachment and selflessness go together. In fact, in order to develop selfless love we have

to give up selfishness and attachment. This is the meaning of renunciation in Buddhism.

Renunciation, by making one selfless, develops into concern for others as well as happiness and tranquility. Unhappiness is due to a concern with oneself and one's needs. By giving up self-concerns, one becomes happy and tranquil. This tranquility and stability of the mind, accompanied by selfless happiness is the experience called *samadhi* (equilibrium) in Buddhism.

7. Harmonious Practice

Once the harmonious goal of tranquility has been set, and the life oriented in that direction, the behaviour automatically falls in line with the goal of tranquility. Then the practice of tranquility proper begins. Practice means repetition. What is repeated is the effort to be tranquil. This effort to be tranquil is what is called meditation in Buddhism. This effort to be tranquil is not really an effort because it is not a “doing” but a “not doing.” It is done by letting go and relaxing and being still. Stillness is not something we do. It is a not doing but a letting go.

The original Pali term for meditation is *bhāvanā*, which means development or “evolution.” This development is of two kinds: *samata* (tranquility) and *vipassanā* (unseeing). The development of *samata* is the practice of the withdrawal of attention from the sensory objects, and then



focusing of attention on the reaction to the object within. Instead of focusing attention on the object, if one focuses attention on the reaction, the reaction that is unconscious stops. This is because the reaction can go on only unconsciously. The moment we make it conscious it cannot go on. The development of *vipassana* is the practice of looking at the experience of seeing, instead of looking at what is seen. In other words it is seeing how one sees, instead of what one sees. This needs no further elaboration. It is best understood through direct experience in meditation. Attempts to discuss it, only leads to further confusion. This kind of introspective observation is called **apperception**. Perception is focusing on the object seen, but apperception is focusing not on the object, but on the process of seeing. This produces insight (*paññâ*), which is seeing the subjective process of perception in its elements, as a series of mental events, one coming after the other. It is this series of subjective mental events that is personalized as “mine,” which builds up the concept of “self.” When this is fully recognized, the delusion of personal existence disappears.

The above two aspects of meditation are broken up into the **fourfold harmonious practice** (*cattaro sammappadhana*). This fourfold harmonious practice comprises: **prevention** of unwholesome mental states (*samvara*), **elimination** of unwholesome mental states (*pahana*), the **cultivation** of wholesome mental states (*bhavana*), and the **maintenance** of wholesome mental states (*anurakkhana*). The Buddha said: “The mind in its natural state is pure. It becomes polluted due to adventitious pollutants that enter through the senses.” Therefore prevention, removal, cultivation and preservation always occur at the senses. There has to be a constant watch over the senses during meditation (*indriya samvara*). This is why before the cultivation of **introversion of attention** (*satipatthana*) the

fourfold harmonious practice (*cattaro sammappadhana*) must be practiced. Many a meditator does not pay attention to the fourfold harmonious practice taught by the Buddha. Instead they go straight on to “concentration on the breath” calling it *anapanasati*. This emphasis on concentration has, however, led to a confusion of meditation with hypnosis.

It would be far more beneficial to understand meditation as taught by the Buddha, as a purification of the mind. The unwholesome mental states to be removed are the emotional excitements with the accompanying tensions of the body. The wholesome mental state to be cultivated is the tranquility of mind and the accompanying relaxation of the body. This can also lead to the experience of rapture of the mind, and comfort of the body, with complete stillness of the mind. The achievement of this experience is called entering the **first ecstasy** (*pathamajjhana*), which results in universal benevolence (*metta*), mental health, and clarity of thought. Because the first ecstasy is free of the emotional hindrances, which are self-centered, the first ecstasy contains universal benevolence, or selfless love.

Emotional excitements are prevented from arising, through the practice of guarding the senses (*indriya sanwara*), which is the withdrawal of attention from the sense objects, or perceptual images. However, memories from past sensory experiences can arise in the mind even if one removes attention to outside sense objects (sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches). These latter excitements are removed from the mind by the simple act of withdrawing attention from memory images (*prahâna*). Excitement remains only as long as we hold onto these memories. The cultivation of tranquility, simply stated, is the focusing of attention within (*sati + upatthana* =

satipatthana), calmly observing the tensions, discomfort and excitement as they gradually subside when one ceases reacting to external objects perceived through the senses, with desire, hate, fear or shame.

This means: the emotional reaction to observed pleasant and unpleasant sensations is an unconscious process. When we focus our attention within, we become consciously aware of the unconscious process. In other words we are making the unconscious process conscious. This makes the unconscious process stop, because the unconscious process cannot go on consciously. Of course the unconscious process does not disappear suddenly. It takes time for the hormones released during emotional excitement to subside, just as the heating element on an electric stove cools down gradually after switching off. If one becomes impatient, and begins to worry about the delay, then the disturbance continues.

This is why the maintenance is important. The calmness is maintained by the practice of constant focusing of attention within, or introspection observed from moment to moment without focusing on perceptual images or memory images. Proper meditation, therefore, is not something one does a few minutes or even a few hours a day. It is something to be done every moment in our lives. In other words, it is a way of life. You don't do meditation; you live it.

8. Harmonious Attention

The constant focus of attention within is called harmonious attention. This attention results in the observation of the experience within, which is **introspection** (*sati sampajañña*). This means: when one focuses attention within, one becomes

aware of the reaction of the body to sensory stimulation (*kaya anupassana*). At first, the reaction is noticed as movements and tensions in the body. Then the reaction is noticed as feelings in the body, which may be pleasant or unpleasant. This is awareness of feelings (*vedana anupassana*). As the awareness progresses, one begins to notice one's emotions or the mood changes from calm to excitement (*citta anupassana*), and back to calm. Further deepening of awareness leads to the observation of the thoughts or concepts (*dhamma anupassana*) that go on in the mind. One also observes how these thoughts start the emotional excitements. This helps to identify the reaction as a sensual desire, anger, lethargy, anxiety, worry, or confusion. This reaction is seen to occur in three stages: the cognitive, affective, and active, normally referred to as thinking, feeling and acting respectively. In other words: the reaction of the organism to environmental stimulation comes in the form of a chain reaction: perception, cognition, mood arousal, decision, action.

This awareness of emotional reactions is very important in dealing with them. Just as we cannot fight an unseen enemy, we cannot control or eliminate an unknown emotional state. Sometimes emotions are present in us but we do not notice them. This phenomenon is well known to modern psychologists, and they see it as one of the causes of mental illness. What Sigmund Freud called the "unconscious," is the totality of the emotions of which we are not aware.

What Sigmund Freud called "repression" was not a force that kept the normal mental processes unconscious. What repression did was to keep unconscious experiences that were once conscious but unpleasant. Freud used the technique of psychoanalysis called "free association" to get in touch

with these repressed emotional reactions. The cause of this repression, according to Freud, is the shame and fear based on the **conscience**.

The Buddha did recognize the idea of **repression** when he treated psychological problems by getting the patients to recall past lives. Today there are psychoanalysts such as Brian L. Weiss MD of New York, who use “past life recall” in their practice. The Buddha did not find it necessary to use the concept of repression but he did emphasize the importance of introspection (*satipatthana*), which is today translated generally as mindfulness. We become conscious of emotions through introspection and we become unconscious of them due to lack of introspection. Harmonious attention (*samma sati*) or introspection (*satipatthana*) is, therefore, what resolves all conflicts within and brings about tranquility of mind and mental health.

9. Harmonious Mental Equilibrium

The fourfold exercise purifies and tranquilizes the mind and brings the mind to a state of equilibrium or mental repose (*samadhi*). There are different levels of tranquility called ecstasies (*jhana*).

First, it is important to distinguish between ecstasy and the hypnotic state. The hypnotic state is the result of passive imagination. It is a state of mind midway between waking and sleeping. One can easily get into this state when one gets tired of concentration and become lethargic and drowsy (*thina middha*) when meditating. Often this is mistaken for *samadhi* or *jhana*. Ecstasy (*jhana*) is a state derived from purity of mind, free from emotional excitement, where the body is fully relaxed

and the mind is fully awake and alert. With full awareness one experiences a state of mental bliss and bodily ease, free of emotional excitements and tensions, where the mind is still. There are four levels of tranquility called ecstasy (*jhana*):

The first level ecstasy has five constituents to it: inference (*vitakka*), inquiry (*vicara*), rapture (*piti*), comfort (*sukha*), and stillness of mind (*ekaggata*). As the mind becomes calmer these factors of the first ecstasy begin to disappear one by one. The more the mind becomes calm, the less and less becomes the factors, as follows:

- 1) **First ecstasy** – inference, inquiry, rapture, comfort, stillness
- 2) **Second ecstasy** – rapture, comfort, stillness
- 3) **Third ecstasy** – comfort, stillness
- 4) **Fourth ecstasy** – stillness, (with introspection)

The Four Ecstasies (*Jhana*)

| 1 st Ecstasy | 2 nd Ecstasy | 3 rd Ecstasy | 4 th Ecstasy |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Vitakka</i> – Inference | | | |
| <i>Vicara</i> – Inquiry | | | |
| <i>Piti</i> – Rapture | <i>Piti</i> – Rapture | | |
| <i>Sukha</i> – Comfort | <i>Sukha</i> – Comfort | <i>Sukha</i> - Comfort | |
| <i>Ekaggata</i> - Stillness | <i>Ekaggata</i> - Stillness | <i>Ekaggata</i> - Stillness | <i>Ekaggata</i> - Stillness |

As indicated above, there is a gradual reduction of experience with the relaxation of the body and the quietening of the mind. This is not something that a person does. It happens according to the principle of determinism in the form of a series of antecedents, one depending on the other. It is a natural process by which a person gradually falls into practice.

These events are referred to as the steps in the process of stream entry (*sotapatti anga*). They are:

- 5) Association with proficient followers of the Sublime way (*sappurisa sevana*)
- 6) Hearing the sublime teaching (*saddhama savana*)
- 7) Deterministic reflection (*yoniso manasikara*)
- 8) Practicing the Sublime way in accordance with one's understanding (*dhammanudhamma patipatti*).

The Sequence of events that lead to ecstasy (*jhana*) are:

- 1) When one diligently practices purification of mind (*appamattassa viharato*)
- 2) Then one begins to experience joy (*pamujjam jayati*)
- 3) Joy develops into rapture (*pamuditassa piti jayati*)
- 4) Rapture when present in the mind, the body relaxes (*piti manassa kayo passambhati*)
- 5) The relaxed body feels comfortable (*passaddha kayo sukham vediyati*)
- 6) When the body is comfortable, the mind enters equilibrium (*sukhino cittam samadhiyati*)
- 7) When the mind is in equilibrium, Dhamma appears in the mind (*samahite citte dhamman patubhavanti*).

“One, whose mind is in equilibrium, is aware of how things come to be (*samahito yathabhutam pajanati*).” This purity and tranquility paves the way to proper **introspection** (*upekkha*) the observation of the subjective experience objectively, without personalization. This proper introspection results in **apperception** (*abhiññâ*), the attention being focused on how one sees, instead of what one sees. How one sees is the subjective experience of the process of perception, which is

seen analytically as a series of mental events divided into **five lots of personalized experiences** (*pancupadanakkhanda*).

This results in a **paradigm shift** from **personal existence** to **impersonal experience** (*paññâ*), which awakens one from the dream of existence and releases (*vimutti*) one from of the delusion of existence (*bhava nirodha*). This results in the perfect unshakeable imperturbability of mind called **NIRVANA**. This is the **Harmonious Awakening** from the dream of existence (*samma sambodhi*).

10. Nirvana

At this final stage in the development of the path of Buddhism, an individual goes through a process of non-personalization. The term “depersonalization” is used in modern psychiatry to refer to a psychopathological condition, but in Buddhism we use the term non-personalization in a genuine healthy sense. In Buddhism, non-personalization is not emotional or unconscious as it is in neurosis, but rational and conscious. It is not a derealization of “personality” but a realization of “impersonality.” It has to be done to gain freedom from the “delusion of existence” of a “self-in-the-world,” which is seen to be responsible for all the evil and suffering in the world. This delusion of existence, though normal, is seen as pathological in Buddhism. To be free from this delusion is considered to be supernormal and selfless.

Existence is seen as a delusion in Buddhism, because the process that we call life is a process of change that begins at birth, and ends at death, and in between is the change that we call growth and decay. In fact from the time we are born, we are in the process of dying. Our life is like a ball thrown into the

air. We may see it rising up, but it is in the process of falling down. Life is a dynamic process of change. It is not a static existence. Existence is a static concept in a dynamic reality.

If life is not a real existence, can there be a real death? Death is normally seen as the opposite of existence, or the absence of existence. If there is no real life there is no real death. If there is no real death, there is no real reason to worry about death. Why we worry is because we think we exist. The problem therefore is an illusion or rather a delusion. Then the solution of the problem is the freedom from the delusion of existence.

Existence is a concept derived from the process of perception. Perception is a mental process that goes on unconsciously. Because it is unconscious, we are not aware of it. We do not even know how it occurs. If we can become aware of it, we can know how the experience of existence occurs. **When we are aware of this, we are free of the delusion of existence. When we are free of the delusion of existence all the suffering based on this delusion comes to an end.** This is the meaning of the attainment of NIRVANA.

Instead of experiencing existence, we begin to experience impersonal experience or consciousness that arises and ceases based on the necessary conditions. Life is like a flame that continues dependent on conditions. When one of the conditions is absent the flame goes out, so is the occurrence of death. **Nirvana is immortality, though not eternal life. It is freedom from death through freedom from the delusion of existence.**

The paradigm shift from existence to experience is carried out through non-personalization, because the experience of existence is a result of personalizing impersonal phenomena. **Through this process of non-personalization, we are able to give up what has been personalized. We begin to see that**

there is nothing that we can call our own. “What is not my own is impersonal. What is impersonal is not “mine” or “myself,” said the Buddha. Even the body and mind, and whatever else we call the “self,” is given up. Non-personalization is what makes an individual literally and completely selfless. When this happens, one can even face death without anxiety because there is neither a “self” nor any possession to protect or fear losing.

When in the relaxed, calm state, when an individual has attained to a state of tranquility by developing the ecstasies, he ceases to experience a sense of self. This makes one realize that the sense of self is dependent on conditions and therefore not real. This prepares the mind for a rational non-personalization. Then one begins to reason as follows:

What is dependent on conditions is unstable (*anicca*)
What is unstable is uncomfortable (*dukkha*)
What is uncomfortable is not as I want
What is not as I want is not under my power
What is not under my power is not mine (*netam mama*)
What is not mine is not me (*neso hamasmi*)
What is not me is not my “self.” (*neso me attâti*)

Seeing all that has been personalized in this way, one loses interest in all mental constructs. This results in dispassion, and releases the grip of personality. This is the meaning of impersonality (*anatta*).

The complete freedom from personalization is the aim of Buddhism. It is an inner transformation. The transformed individual has transcended personality and is free from all discomfort. Such an individual is not a personality any more. However, a personality is thrust upon this non-person by society. People may still refer to this non-person as a person and designate an identity. This is why the Buddha says, “The

Transcendent One, (*Tathagata* does not exist here and now, so how can he be existing after death?” Because the Buddha does not exist here and now, he cannot die. This is the **immortality** (*amata*), which is neither eternal life nor annihilation. It is only freedom from the delusion of “existence.” This is **NIRVANA** the sumum bonum of Buddhism.

The concept of *paññā*, (which is a **paradigm shift from personal existence to impersonal experience**) and *vimutti* (the **awakening from the dream of existence**) are difficult for the beginner to understand. It is only through a proper understanding of the **antecedental concurrence** (*paticcasamuppada*) or **psychic determinism** of experience that one can begin to comprehend these concepts fully.

To exist is to occupy space and time, but space and time are concepts based on perception, which is experience. “Existence” (*bhava*) is conceived as the existence of a “self in the world,” and living is the involvement of the “self” with the “world.” However, this “**existence**” is **only an experience**. Existence is a concept resulting from turning an idea into a concrete object. This means, what is seen as an object outside is a picture in the mind; it is a creation of the process of perception. The experience of the subjective “self” is also a picture in the mind (a self-image); it is the result of the process of perception. The experience therefore precedes the notion of “existence.” The “self” and the “world” exist only in the experience. When we realize that experience is all that is, that it is the basis on which existence stands, and that existence is only a product of experience, we are free of existence. This is experiencing experience, instead of experiencing existence. This freedom from existence is *NIRVANA* (*bhava nirodho nibbanam*).

Even if we are intellectually fully convinced about this, however, we still carry with us the feeling of “self” inside us. Why? This is because the idea of “self” is originating from

emotion (*tanha*) and not from reason. As long as we carry the self-centered emotions with us, we can never be totally free from the “sense of self.” This is why even if we are fully convinced rationally it is necessary to overcome our emotions as soon as possible. When we are fully convinced rationally we fall into the path (*sotâpanna*), but we have to begin to practice the harmonious practice (*sammappadhâna*) to get rid of the passions. Even if we get rid of the basic passions (*anagami*), still we are not free from the “notion of self” (*mana*). It is only when one becomes a breaker of bonds (*arahat*) that the notion of self disappears completely.

11. Conclusion

Buddhism is not a theistic religion nor is it atheistic. For the Buddhist, religion has not come down from heaven to earth to satisfy the purpose of a Creator. To him religion has grown up on earth to fulfill a human need, to solve a human problem, which is the problem of evil, unhappiness, and death. This problem is called the problem of existence. Every person who is born is faced with this problem.

Every person is born to grow old, fall sick and die. No person can avoid parting from the pleasant, and meeting the unpleasant. Every person rich or poor is in want, no matter how much one gets or has. Desires can never be fully satisfied. People remain unhappy as a result. People do not like to think about this reality of life. They prefer to run away into a dream world where their wishes find fulfillment. They prefer to believe that the world is full of pleasure, success and happiness. They also like to believe that the world has been created by an all knowing, all powerful, and loving Creator who protects them from suffering and they feel safe and secure in this belief.

Even when they are compelled by circumstances to face the sufferings of this life they find consolation in the belief that they will have eternal happiness and eternal life after death.

The practice of religion, for the Buddhist, is not obedience to the Creator, but the effort to solve the problem of existence. This problem is not solved by seeking help in the supernatural powers of the Creator, or any other supernatural being, but by the use of human intelligence and the natural human potentials.

This problem of human suffering is understood to be the result of a clash between the human emotions and the reality of impermanence. Since the beginning of life on this planet, living organisms have been struggling to exist, which is a struggle for permanence in an impermanent world. This struggle is a blind, unrealistic one. It always ends in defeat and death. In the higher animals, this struggle is supported by emotions. These emotions are self-centered and their aim is self-preservation and propagation of the species. The emotions being blind to reality, seek permanence (*nicca*), pleasure (*sukha*), ownership and personality (*atta*). Because these notions are unrealistic, the emotional urges are easily frustrated and disappointed. They can never be satisfied, except temporarily and inadequately.

The solution to this problem therefore is not to attempt to satisfy these blind unrealistic emotional urges, through natural or supernatural power, but the eradication of these blind desires or emotional urges, which clash with reality and cause suffering. For human beings dominated by emotional impulses, even the suggestion of eliminating emotions is unpleasant. Therefore, humans keep on suffering thinking that they are enjoying life.

Emotional impulses, though natural, are seen in Buddhism to be the culprits that create suffering. True happiness can be gained only by eliminating emotions from human nature.

Emotions are not only blind to reality, causing unhappiness; they are also responsible for all the evils in human nature. All emotions are self-centered. There are no good emotions or noble emotions. Good nature is the result of the absence of emotions. A mind free of emotions is a calm mind, a happy mind, and a good mind, which is able to think clearly and comprehend the realities of life. It is true that emotions apparently help self-preservation and the propagation of the species. But that pursuit is only a futile effort, which ends in disappointment. Propagation of life is the propagation of death and suffering.

The aim of the Buddhist practice is therefore the elimination of the emotions from human nature. This is achieved not by suppression, repression or sublimation, but by learning to relax the body and calm the mind. Tranquility of mind is the ultimate goal of the Buddhist practice.

Buddhism is not an atheistic religion, though it is not theistic. Avoiding these two extremes, Buddhism takes the medial path, which is humanistic. Buddhism has a humanistic definition of religion and God. God is seen as the human ideal of perfection, which human beings conceive and struggle to realize through the practice of religion. Human beings do attain to the state of perfection from time to time. When a human being attains to this state of perfection, by transcending all human weaknesses, he is called the Awakened One the BUDDHA. The Buddha therefore is the true God of the Buddhist. He is not however the Creator of the world, nor is he supernatural. He is really the winner of perfection and savior of the world, not on a mass scale through supernatural powers, but through the natural but supernormal wisdom of the Buddha. Yet it has to be done by each individual through ones own human

effort. The Buddha only shows the way. Each individual has to work for oneself.

This anthropomorphic God of the Buddhist is not God become man as Christ is in Christianity, but man become God (*brahma bhuto*), through the evolution of the human consciousness. Religion according to the Buddhist humanistic way of thinking is the human effort to solve the problem of existence through an inner transformation or evolution of the human consciousness, which is called Awakening.

The practice of Buddhism, or becoming a Buddhist, is therefore a technique of growth and evolution of the human consciousness. This evolution is not an unconscious process as biological evolution of the species. Nor is it the evolution of the human spirit through the help of a supernatural power. Evolution of the consciousness is a conscious process, which has to be consciously achieved by an individual through one's own human effort. It cannot be performed by one individual on another, like an operation being performed by a surgeon. It has to be executed by each individual through individual effort.

The method used is the growth technique called the Supernormal Eight-fold Way, which raises a normal person to a supernormal level of being. It begins with association with those humans who are proficient, evolved, and awakened, as a result of acquiring the harmonious perspective. This leads to the harmonious orientation or turning one's life towards the goal of tranquility, which is the original state of calmness or stillness of mind that has been lost due to being bombarded by stimuli from the external environment.

When the goal orientation has been achieved, the behaviour in the form of speech, action and life style changes to calmness. In order to maintain this calmness of life, one has to

continue the harmonious practice, which consists of withdrawal of attention from the sensory data in the form of perceptual images and memory images, and focusing of attention on the subjective experience. This is being constantly aware of the body, sensations, emotions, and the cognitive process. This stops the reaction of the organism to environmental stimulation, resulting in calmness and tranquility of mind.

This tranquility of mind makes it possible for a human being to become aware of the reality of life, which is the conditioned nature of all phenomena and their instability (*anicca*), painfulness (*dukkha*) and impersonality (*anatta*). When one has seen this clearly, all emotional excitements cease forever and one becomes free of all discomfort. Thus, one reaches the ultimate goal of the Buddhist, which is the solution of the problem of existence.

The ultimate freedom from all discomfort is achieved only by freedom from the delusion of “existence of a self in the world.” The “existence” of the “world” and the “self” according to the Buddhist way of thinking is only an illusion created by the process of perception accompanied by emotion. In order to gain freedom from suffering, one has to gain freedom from this illusion. Then one becomes completely and literally selfless. When this happens one becomes free of death, and therefore immortal. If there is no self, there is no one to die. Death therefore is also an illusion.

This final goal is not easy to attain. It is specially so for one living a secular life. But the closer one advances to the goal the happier becomes ones life. The ultimate aim of the Buddhist way of life is happiness for oneself as well as others. The extent to which one gains happiness and produces

happiness for others depends on the extent to which one has become calm and tranquil within.

Therefore, the practice of the path of the Buddha and his disciples is worthy of serious consideration. Buddhism is more than a practice. It is a conscious process of evolution, which is the evolution of the human consciousness, resulting in the evolution of a new species -- the Supernormal (not supernatural) human beings (*Ariya*). This is the meaning of life and the purpose of becoming a Buddhist.

If everyone could pursue inner tranquility, there will be peace and happiness in the world.

Remember that we have lost our equilibrium by reacting to various stimuli from outside. Our job is to return to this original equilibrium. We may have forgotten to return home, we may have even forgotten that we have lost our way. The purpose of this little booklet has been to remind you to come home. This was why the Buddha dispersed his disciples saying: "Freed am I, disciples, from all snares, both celestial and terrestrial. You too, disciples, are free from all snares both celestial and terrestrial. Go on tour, disciples, for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare and happiness of gods and men. Go singly, not in twos. Preach, disciples, the Dhamma that is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle and beautiful in the end, in spirit and in letter. Proclaim the pure divine way of living in its entirety. There are beings who are less infatuated, who would be lost for not hearing the Dhamma. Hearing you, they too would become knowers of the Dhamma and be free."

When the Buddha set out to preach the DHAMMA, after his awakening, someone asked him who he was and where he was going. He answered, "I am the winner of the infinite

(*ananta jina*), I am going to beat the drum of deathlessness for the happiness and welfare of humanity in distress.” He set out to preach with the words:

Open is the door to immortality
For those who have ears to hear
Listen to my sound and be free
From the fears of life and of death



Epilogue

*Paviveka rasan pitva
Rasan upasamassa ca
Niddaro hoti nippapo
Dhamma piti rasan piban*

*Enjoy the taste of solitude
Enjoy the taste of inner peace
Free from lust and free from evil
Enjoy the blissful Dhamma taste*

*Blessed is the appearance of the BUDDHAS
Blessed is the dissemination of DHAMMA
Blessed is the association with the SANGHA
Blessed is the practice TRANSCENDENT*



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Mahathera Madawela Punnaji **A Buddhist Master from Sri Lanka**

Venerable Mahathera Punnaji has come to the West to introduce his discoveries to intelligent readers who have an open mind free from prejudice. He is a Researcher of the original teachings of the Buddha, and has served in North America as a Teacher of Buddhism and a Meditation Master, for nearly 40 years. He is well known for his clear and accurate presentation of Buddhism and has grateful students the world over. This booklet captures some of the essential teachings of the Buddha, discovered by the author and presented in a practical format, applicable to our daily lives, which are far removed from the tranquility that we desperately seek.

The author has spent more than fifty years making an in-depth intensive study of both the theory as well as the practice of Buddhism. He studied various schools of Buddhist thought including what modern scholars have taken to be the earliest source of the teachings of the Buddha, the Pali Nikaya. Because each school of thought claims its own version of Buddhism to be the original teaching, the truly original teaching cannot be identified by a study of history alone. Only by testing them in the crucible of ones own experience can the original teachings be identified. It is also essential that this should be done based on the premise that a Buddha by definition is a fully enlightened being and therefore will not make absurd statements. One should be able to reject absurd interpretations attributed to the Buddha and search for sensible interpretations.

Using these criteria, Venerable Punnaji discovered that the original teachings were found in the Pali Nikayas preserved by the Theravadins, though not fully understood by them. Modern scholars were unable to get at the original teachings because they focused their attention on a later interpretation of

the teachings called the Abhidharma and commentaries. There were several commentaries written by different schools of thought during the time of Asoka. What is today popular among the Theravada school is a collection of commentaries made by the Theravada school called Vibhajjavada. Even reading the Theravada Suttas by learning Pali, the scriptural language, is not necessarily successful. This is because the interpretation of the Pali language itself is based on the later commentaries. It takes a highly critical and intellectual person, with an excellent command of both Pali as well the English language, and who has a background of modern philosophy, modern psychology, and modern science to translate into English the deeper teachings of the Buddha. The author certainly is very well equipped for this task. Venerable Punnaji is well versed in Western fields of scientific knowledge, including medicine, and has a thorough understanding of comparative religions, modern philosophy and psychology. His interpretations of the original teachings of the Buddha have been much enriched by these forays beyond a mere study and practice of Buddhism. No modern scholar has so far taken the time and energy necessary to be able to identify the elusive original teachings of the Buddha.

This booklet contains practical information, based on the essential teachings of the Buddha, which we can incorporate into our daily lives, to enjoy peace and tranquility. A careful study of the contents will reveal many unknown facts about the wisdom of the Buddha, which other books on Buddhism have never been able to point out. This book also reveals that the teaching of the Buddha is ever modern, and that the Buddha solved the problem of existence that modern thinkers have not been able to solve. It also reveals that the Buddha is the highest evolved animal who had transcended all animalistic and human weaknesses and become truly Divine.

THE 119 YEAR OLD BUDDHIST MAHA VIHARA, BRICKFIELDS

The Buddhist Maha Vihara was founded in 1894 by the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society (SAWS), the oldest registered Buddhist Society in the Klang Valley.

From its very inception, the Vihara has been managed by the Sinhala Buddhist community but always financially supported by the Chinese and Indian communities. The first structure of the Vihara was the Main Shrine room, completed in early 20th Century. The donors for the Shrine Room, as recorded in the Selangor Government Gazette 1896, pg. 408 are clearly Chinese and Indian communities and among the main donors were:

Kapitan Yeap Quang Seng, Towkay Loke Yew, K. Tambusamy Pillay, R. Doraisamy Pillay, Loke Chow Kit, San Peng and Son, Lim Tua Taw, etc...

The Vihara was always the focal point to mobilize the Buddhist community. The large gathering to protest and stop the screening the then controversial film “Light of Asia” in 1927 in Malaysia was also held at the Vihara, and so was the mass gathering and signature campaign in the 1950s to lobby the government to declare Wesak as a national holiday.

During the Emergency period of 1948-1960, monks from the Vihara made a massive impact reaching out to calm and educate the psychologically disoriented Chinese New Villagers who were evicted from their traditional lands and placed in new settlements by the Government which was fighting a communist insurgency.

Since the 1940s, the Vihara commenced a free Dhamma publications program as a Dhammadutta outreach to the masses which by the year 2012 was made available in 27 languages, with millions of

copies of books and CDs produced. The Vihara's Buddhist Institute Sunday Dhamma School (BISDS), founded in 1929, is the oldest Sunday School in the country with an enrolment of more than 1200 students and continues to produce systematic books on Buddhist studies for children.

The Wesak procession organized by the Vihara since the 1890s is the oldest and largest religious procession in the country. The 3-day Wesak celebrations at the Vihara attracts about 100,000 people.

Many students or devotees who have studied and benefited from the BISDS, the Vihara's Free Publications, Dhamma programs, classes, talks, etc have gone on to set up new Buddhist societies and centers which help to spread Buddhism in the country far and wide.

The SAWS is also one of the founding members of the Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) formed in 1983, a Council which constructively engages the Government on matters affecting non-Muslims in the country. The MCCBCHST Administrative office is based at the Vihara.

In 2004, the Vihara was a major focal point in the country to collect relief aid to assist the South Asian Tsunami that killed almost 280,000 people. Several 40 forty foot container equivalents of relief aid were dispatched out by the Vihara to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Myanmar and Thailand by air, sea and land.

Buddhists remain to be the country's largest organ donors, thanks to Cornea and Organ Donation Campaign carried out by the Vihara.

The Vihara continues to operate to deliver its obligation to the Buddhist community till this day and is governed and directed by its Vision, 4 Missions, 6 Strategic Objectives and 4 Ennoblers in tribute and gratitude to all our past and current Sangha, volunteers,

donors, friends, etc. We would be failing in our duty if we fail to mention the name of the foremost amongst them, our late Venerable Chief, ie. Ven Dr Kirinde Sri Dhammananda.

Vision

To be a leading international center for the Learning, Practice and Dissemination of the Buddha Dhamma

Mission

To provide a conducive environment to:

- promote scholarship and study of the Buddha Dhamma
- propagate the Buddha Dhamma
- be the focus of Buddhist activities for the larger community
- foster Theravada Buddhist cultural and traditional practices

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To be the Buddhist center of choice for:

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5. Compassion in Action
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4. Equanimity

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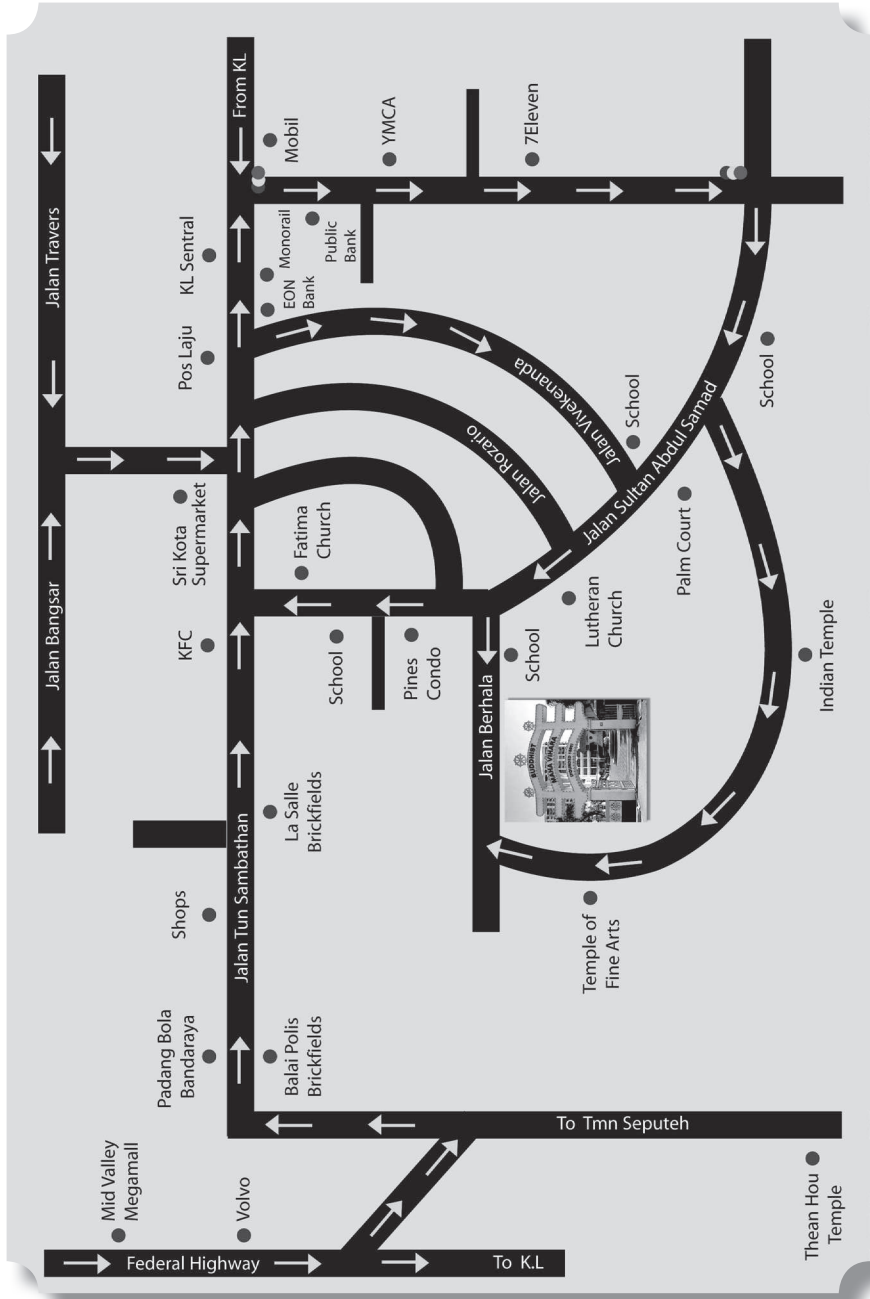
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Donations can also be made by VISA and MasterCard at the Buddhist Maha Vihara Office.

“The Return to Tranquility,” is an effort to introduce the essence of the original teaching of the Buddha, to those who have a genuine interest in comprehending and practicing the Dhamma. This booklet clearly explains how emotional impulses cause much unhappiness and agitation in our lives. Page by page, the author shows the reader how the original tranquility that has been lost as a result of recurrent emotional upheavals in life, can be re-established. Indeed, the entire teaching of the Buddha is nothing but the pursuit of tranquility, which reaches its pinnacle in Nirvana, the ultimate imperturbable serenity of mind.

This booklet has been written with the novice seeker as well as the erudite scholar in mind. However, it will also appeal to those who have a fair knowledge of Buddhism but have gaps in their understanding. For the researcher, the booklet presents a framework on which further study of Buddhism can be undertaken. A list of references is included in the bibliography.



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