

DHARMA

CHAPTER ONE
CAUSATION

I
THE FOURFOLD NOBLE TRUTH

1. The world is full of suffering. Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, sickness and death are sufferings. To meet a person whom one hates is suffering, to be separated from a beloved one is suffering, to be vainly struggling to satisfy one's needs is suffering. In fact, life that is not free from desire and passion is always involved with distress. This is called the Truth of Suffering.

The cause of human suffering is undoubtedly found in the thirsts of the physical body and in the illusions of worldly passion. If these thirsts and illusions are traced to their source, they are found to be rooted in the intense desires of physical instincts. Thus, desire, having a strong will-to-live as its basis, seeks that which it feels desirable, even if it is sometimes death. This is called the Truth of the Cause of Suffering.

If desire, which lies at the root of all human passion, can be removed, then passion will die out and all human

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suffering will be ended. This is called the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.

In order to enter into a state where there is no desire and no suffering, one must follow a certain Path. The stages of this Noble Eightfold Path are: Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Behavior, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. This is called the Truth of the Noble Path to the Cessation of the Cause of Suffering.

People should keep these Truths clearly in mind, for the world is filled with suffering and if anyone wishes to escape from suffering, he must sever the ties of worldly passion which is the sole cause of suffering. The way of life which is free from all worldly passion and suffering can only be known through Enlightenment, and Enlightenment can only be attained through the discipline of the Noble Eightfold Path.

2. All those who are seeking Enlightenment must understand the Fourfold Noble Truth. Without understanding this, they will wander about interminably in the bewildering maze of life's illusions. Those who understand this Fourfold Noble Truth are called "the people who have acquired the eyes of Enlightenment."

Therefore, those who wish to follow the Buddha's

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teachings should concentrate their minds on this Fourfold Noble Truth and seek to make their understanding of its meaning clear. In all ages, a saint, if he is a true saint, is one who understands it and teaches it to others.

When a person clearly understands the Fourfold Noble Truth, then the Noble Eightfold Path will lead one away from greed; and if a person is free from greed, one will not quarrel with the world, one will not kill, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor cheat, nor abuse, nor flatter, nor envy, nor lose one's temper, nor forget the transiency of life nor will one be unjust.

3. Following the Noble Path is like entering a dark room with a light in the hand: the darkness will all be cleared away and the room will be filled with light.

People who understand the meaning of the Noble Truths and have learned to follow the Noble Path are in possession of the light of wisdom that will clear away the darkness of ignorance.

Buddha leads people, merely by indicating to them the Fourfold Noble Truth. Those who understand it properly will attain Enlightenment; they will be able to guide and support others in this bewildering world, and they will be worthy of trust. When the Fourfold Noble Truth is clearly understood, all the sources of worldly passion

are dried up.

Advancing from this Fourfold Noble Truth, the disciples of Buddha will attain all other precious truths; they will gain the wisdom and insight to understand all meanings, and will become capable of preaching the Dharma to all the peoples of the world.

II CAUSATION

1. There are causes for all human suffering, and there is a way by which they may be ended, because everything in the world is the result of a vast concurrence of causes and conditions, and everything disappears as these causes and conditions change and pass away.

Rain falls, winds blow, plants bloom, leaves mature and are blown away. These phenomena are all interrelated with causes and conditions, and are brought about by them, and disappear as the causes and conditions change.

One is born through the conditions of parentage. His body is nourished by food: his spirit is nurtured by teaching and experience.

Therefore, both flesh and spirit are related to conditions and are changed as conditions change.

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As a net is made up by a series of knots, so everything in this world is connected by a series of knots. If anyone thinks that the mesh of a net is an independent, isolated thing, he is mistaken.

It is called a net because it is made up of a series of connected meshes, and each mesh has its place and responsibilities in relation to other meshes.

2. Blossoms come about because of a series of conditions that lead up to their blooming. Leaves are blown away because a series of conditions lead up to it. Blossoms do not appear independently, nor does a leaf fall of itself, out of its season. So everything has its coming forth and passing away; nothing can be independent without any change.

It is the everlasting and unchanging rule of this world that everything is created by a series of causes and conditions and everything disappears by the same rule; everything changes, nothing remains constant.

III DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

1. Where is the source of human grief, lamentation, pain and agony? Is it not to be found in the fact that

people are generally desirous.

They cling obstinately to lives of wealth and honor, comfort and pleasure, excitement and self indulgence, ignorant of the fact that the desire for these very things is the source of human suffering.

From its beginning, the world has been filled with a succession of calamities, over and above the unavoidable facts of illness, old age and death.

But if one carefully considers all the facts, one must be convinced that at the basis of all suffering lies the principle of craving desire. If avarice can be removed, human suffering will come to an end.

Ignorance is manifested in greed that fills the human mind.

It comes from the fact that people are unaware of the true reason for the succession of things.

From ignorance and greed there spring impure desires for things that are, in fact, unobtainable, but for which people restlessly and blindly search.

Because of ignorance and greed, people imagine discriminations where, in reality, there are no discrimina-

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tions. Inherently, there is no discrimination of right and wrong in human behavior; but people, because of ignorance, imagine such distinctions and judge them as right or wrong.

Because of their ignorance, all people are always thinking wrong thoughts and always losing the right viewpoint and, clinging to their egos, they take wrong actions. As a result, they become attached to a delusive existence.

Making their deeds the field for their egos, using the working of discrimination of the mind as seed, beclouding the mind by ignorance, fertilizing it with the rain of craving desires, irrigating it by the willfulness of egotism, they add the conception of evil, and carry this incarnation of delusion about with them.

2. In reality, therefore, it is their own mind that causes the delusions of grief, lamentation, pain and agony.

This whole world of delusion is nothing but a shadow caused by the mind. And yet, it is also from this same mind that the world of Enlightenment appears.

3. In this world there are three wrong viewpoints.

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If one clings to these viewpoints, then all things in this world are but to be denied.

First, some say that all human experience is based on destiny; second, some hold that everything is created by God and controlled by His will; third, some say that everything happens by chance without having any cause or condition.

If all has been decided by destiny, both good deeds and evil deeds are predetermined, weal and woe are predestined; nothing would exist that has not been foreordained. Then all human plans and efforts for improvement and progress would be in vain and humanity would be without hope.

The same is true of the other viewpoints, for, if everything in the last resort is in the hands of an unknowable God, or of blind chance, what hope has humanity except in submission? It is no wonder that people holding these conceptions lose hope and neglect efforts to act wisely and to avoid evil.

In fact, these three conceptions or viewpoints are all wrong: everything is a succession of appearances whose source is the accumulation of causes and conditions.

CHAPTER TWO

THE THEORY OF MIND-ONLY AND THE REAL STATE OF THINGS

I

IMPERMANENCY AND EGOLESSNESS

1. Though both body and mind appear because of cooperating causes, it does not follow that there is an ego-personality. As the body of flesh is an aggregate of elements, it is, therefore, impermanent.

If the body were an ego-personality, it could do this and that as it would determine.

A king has the power to praise or punish as he wishes, but he becomes ill despite his intent or desire, he comes to old age unwillingly, and his fortune and his wishes often have little to do with each other.

Neither is the mind the ego-personality. The human mind is an aggregate of causes and conditions. It is in constant change.

If the mind were an ego-personality, it could do this and that as it would determine; but the mind often flies

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from what it knows is right and chases after evil reluctantly. Still, nothing seems to happen exactly as its ego desires.

2. If one is asked whether the body is constant or impermanent, he will be obliged to answer impermanent.

If one is asked whether impermanent existence is happiness or suffering, he will generally have to answer suffering.

If a person believes that such an impermanent thing, so changeable and filled with suffering, is the ego-personality, it is a serious mistake.

The human mind is also impermanent and suffering; it has nothing that can be called an ego-personality.

Our true body and mind, which make up an individual life, and the external world surrounding it, are far apart from both the conceptions of “me” and “mine”.

It is simply the mind clouded over by impure desires, and impervious to wisdom, that obstinately persists in thinking of “me” and “mine.”

Since both the body and its surroundings are originated by cooperating causes and conditions, they are con-

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tinually changing and never can come to an end.

The human mind, in its never-ending changes, is like the flowing water of river or the burning flame of a candle; like an ape, it is forever jumping about, not ceasing for even a moment.

A wise man, seeing and hearing such, should break away from any attachment to body or mind, if he is ever to attain Enlightenment.

3. There are five things which no one is able to accomplish in this world: first, to cease growing old when he is growing old; second, to cease being sick; third, to cease dying; fourth, to deny extinction when there is extinction; fifth, to deny exhaustion.

Ordinary people in the world sooner or later run into these facts, and most people suffer consequently, but those who have heard the Buddha's teaching do not suffer because they understand that these are unavoidable.

There are four truths in this world: first, all living beings rise from ignorance; second, all objects of desire are impermanent, uncertain and suffering; third, all existing things are also impermanent, uncertain and suffering; fourth, there is nothing that can be called an "ego," and there is no such thing as "mine" in all the world.

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These truths that everything is impermanent and passing and egoless, have no connection with the fact of Buddha's appearing or not appearing in this world. These truths are certain; Buddha knows this and, therefore, preaches the Dharma to all people.

II

THE THEORY OF MIND-ONLY

1. Both delusion and Enlightenment originate within the mind, and every existence or phenomenon arises from the functions of the mind, just as different things appear from the sleeve of a magician.

The activities of the mind have no limit, they form the surroundings of life. An impure mind surrounds itself with impure things and a pure mind surrounds itself with pure things; hence, surroundings have no more limits than the activities of the mind.

Just as a picture is drawn by an artist, surroundings are created by the activities of the mind. While the surroundings created by Buddha are pure and free from defilement, those created by ordinary people are not so.

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The mind conjures up multifarious forms just as a skilful painter creates pictures of various worlds. There is nothing in the world that is not mind-created. A Buddha is like our mind; sentient beings are just like Buddhas. Therefore there is no difference among the mind, Buddhas and sentient beings in their capability of creating all things.

Buddha has a right understanding of all things as fashioned by the mortal mind. Therefore, those who know this are able to see the real Buddha.

2. But the mind that creates its surroundings is never free from memories, fears or laments, not only in the past but in the present and the future, because they have arisen from ignorance and greed.

It is from ignorance and greed that the world of delusion is born, and all the vast complexity of coordinating causes and conditions exists within the mind and nowhere else.

Both life and death arise from the mind and exist within the mind. Hence, when the mind that concerns itself with life and death passes on, the world of life and death passes with it.

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An unenlightened life rises from a mind that is bewildered by its own world of delusion. If we learn that there is no world of delusion outside the mind, the bewildered mind becomes clear; and because we cease to create impure surroundings, we attain Enlightenment.

In this way the world of life and death is created by the mind, is in bondage to the mind, is ruled by the mind; the mind is the master of every situation. The world of suffering is brought about by the deluded mortal mind.

3. Therefore, all things are primarily controlled and ruled by the mind, and are created up by the mind. As the wheels follow the ox that draws the cart, so does suffering follow the person who speaks and acts with an impure mind.

But if a person speaks and acts with a good mind, happiness follows him like his shadow. Those who act in evil are followed by the thought, "I have done wrong," and the memory of the act is stored to work out its inevitable retribution in the lives to follow. But those who act from good motives are made happy by the thought, "I have done good," and are made happier by the thought that the good act will bring continuing happiness in the lives to follow.

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If the mind is impure, it will cause the feet to stumble along a rough and difficult road; there will be many a fall and much pain. But if the mind is pure, the path will be smooth and the journey peaceful.

One who is to enjoy the purity of both body and mind walks the path to Buddhahood, breaking the net of selfish, impure thoughts and evil desires. He who is calm in mind acquires peacefulness and thus is able to cultivate his mind day and night with more diligence.

III REAL STATE OF THINGS

1. Since everything in this world is brought about by causes and conditions, there can be no fundamental distinctions among things. The apparent distinctions exist because of people's absurd and discriminating thoughts.

In the sky there is no distinction of east and west; people create the distinctions out of their own minds and then believe them to be true.

Mathematical numbers from one to infinity are each complete numbers, and each in itself carries no distinction of quantity; but people make the discrimination for their own convenience, so as to be able to indicate vary-

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ing amounts.

Inherently there are no distinctions between the process of life and the process of destruction; people make a discrimination and call one birth and the other death. In action there is no discrimination between right and wrong, but people make a distinction for their own convenience.

Buddha keeps away from these discriminations and looks upon the world as upon a passing cloud. To Buddha every definitive thing is illusion; He knows that whatever the mind grasps and throws away is insubstantial; thus He transcends the pitfalls of images and discriminative thought.

2. People grasp at things for their own imagined convenience and comfort; they grasp at wealth and treasure and honors; they cling desperately to mortal life.

They make arbitrary distinctions between existence and non-existence, good and bad, right and wrong. For people, life is a succession of graspings and attachments, and then, because of this, they must assume the illusions of pain and suffering.

Once there was a man on a long journey who came to a river. He said to himself: "This side of the river is

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very difficult and dangerous to walk on, and the other side seems easier and safer, but how shall I get across?" So he built a raft out of branches and reeds and safely crossed the river. Then he thought to himself: "This raft has been very useful to me in crossing the river; I will not abandon it to rot on the bank, but will carry it along with me." And thus he voluntarily assumed an unnecessary burden. Can this man be called a wise man?

This parable teaches that even a good thing, when it becomes an unnecessary burden, should be thrown away; much more so if it is a bad thing. Buddha made it the rule of his life to avoid useless and unnecessary discussions.

3. Things do not come and go; neither do they appear and disappear; therefore, one does not get things or lose things.

Buddha teaches that things neither appear nor disappear since they transcend both the affirmation of existence and the denial of existence. That is, everything being a concordance and succession of causes and conditions, a thing in itself does not exist, so it can be said that it is non-existent. At the same time, because it has a relative connection with causes and conditions, it can be said

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that it is not non-existent.

To adhere to a thing because of its form is the source of delusion. If the form is not grasped and adhered to, this false imagination and absurd delusion will not occur. Enlightenment is seeing this truth and being free from such a foolish delusion.

The world, indeed, is like a dream and the treasures of the world are an alluring mirage. Like the apparent distances in a picture, things have no reality in themselves but are like heat haze.

4. To believe that things created by an incalculable series of causes can last forever is a serious mistake and is called the theory of permanency; but it is just as great a mistake to believe that things completely disappear; this is called the theory of non-existence.

These categories of everlasting life and death, and existence and non-existence, do not apply to the essential nature of things, but only to their appearances as they are observed by defiled human eyes. Because of human desire, people become related and attached to these appearances; but in the essential nature of things, they are free from all such discriminations and attachments.

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Since everything is created by a series of causes and conditions, the appearances of things are constantly changing; that is, there is no consistency about it as there should be about authentic substances. It is because of this constant changing of appearances that we liken things to a mirage and a dream. But, in spite of this constant changing in appearances, things, in their essential spiritual nature, are constant and changeless.

To a human a river seems like a river but to a hungry demon which sees fire in water, it may seem to be like fire. Therefore, to speak to a human about a river existing would have some sense, but to the demon it would have no meaning.

In like manner, it can be said that things are like illusions; they can be said neither to be existent nor non-existent.

Yet it can not be said that, apart from this world of change and appearance, there is another world of permanence and truth. It is a mistake to regard this world as either a temporal world or as a real one.

But ignorant people of this world assume that this is a real world and proceed to act upon that absurd assumption. But as this world is only an illusion, their acts, being

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based upon error, only lead them into harm and suffering.

A wise man, recognizing that the world is but an illusion, does not act as if it were real, so he escapes the suffering.

IV THE MIDDLE WAY

1. To those who choose the path that leads to Enlightenment, there are two extremes that should be carefully avoided. First, there is the extreme of indulgence in the desires of the body. Second, there is the opposite extreme of ascetic discipline, torturing one's body and mind unreasonably.

The Noble Path, that transcends these two extremes and leads to Enlightenment and wisdom and peace of mind, may be called the Middle Way. What is the Middle Way? It consists of the Eightfold Noble Path: Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Behavior, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

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As has been said, all things appear or disappear by reason of an endless series of causes. Ignorant people see life as either existence or non-existence, but wise men see beyond both existence and non-existence something that transcends them both; this is an observation of the Middle Way.

2. Suppose a log is floating in a river. If the log does not become grounded, or sink, or is not taken out by a man, or does not decay, ultimately it will reach the sea. Life is like this log caught in the current of a great river. If a person does not become attached to a life of self-indulgence, or, by renouncing life, does not become attached to a life of self-torture; if a person does not become proud of his virtues or does not become attached to his evil acts; if in his search for Enlightenment he does not become contemptuous of delusion, nor fear it, such a person is following the Middle Way.

The important thing in following the path to Enlightenment is to avoid being caught and entangled in any extreme, that is, always to follow the Middle Way.

Knowing that things neither exist nor do not exist, remembering the dream-like nature of everything, one should avoid being caught by pride of personality or praise for good deeds; or caught and entangled by anything else.

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If a person is to avoid being caught in the current of his desires, he must learn at the very beginning not to grasp at things lest he should become accustomed to them and attached to them. He must not become attached to existence nor to non-existence, to anything inside or outside, neither to good things nor to bad things, neither to right nor to wrong.

If he becomes attached to things, just at that moment, all at once, the life of delusion begins. The one who follows the Noble Path to Enlightenment will not maintain regrets, neither will he cherish anticipations, but, with an equitable and peaceful mind, will meet what comes.

3. Enlightenment has no definite form or nature by which it can manifest itself; so in Enlightenment itself, there is nothing to be enlightened.

Enlightenment exists solely because of delusion and ignorance; if they disappear, so will Enlightenment. And the opposite is true also: there is no Enlightenment apart from delusion and ignorance; no delusion and ignorance apart from Enlightenment.

Therefore, be on guard against thinking of Enlightenment as a “thing” to be grasped at, lest it, too, should become an obstruction. When the mind that was

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in darkness becomes enlightened, it passes away, and with its passing, the thing which we call Enlightenment passes also.

As long as people desire Enlightenment and grasp at it, it means that delusion is still with them; therefore, those who are following the way to Enlightenment must not grasp at it, and if they reach Enlightenment they must not linger in it.

When people attain Enlightenment in this sense, it means that everything is Enlightenment itself as it is; therefore, people should follow the path to Enlightenment until in their thoughts, worldly passions and Enlightenment become identical as they are.

4. This concept of universal oneness – that things in their essential nature have no distinguishing marks – is called “Sunyata.” Sunyata means non-substantiality, the un-born, having no self-nature, no duality. It is because things in themselves have no form or characteristics that we can speak of them as neither being born nor being destroyed. There is nothing about the essential nature of things that can be described in terms of discrimination; that is why things are called non-substantial.

As has been pointed out, all things appear and disappear because of causes and conditions. Nothing ever

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exists entirely alone; everything is in relation to everything else.

Wherever there is light, there is shadow; wherever there is length, there is shortness; wherever there is white, there is black. Just like these, as the self-nature of things can not exist alone, they are called non-substantial.

By the same reasoning, Enlightenment can not exist apart from ignorance, nor ignorance apart from Enlightenment. Since things do not differ in their essential nature, there can be no duality.

5. People habitually think of themselves as being connected with birth and death, but in reality there are no such conceptions.

When people are able to realize this truth, they have realized the truth of the non-duality of birth and death.

It is because people cherish the idea of an ego-personality that they cling to the idea of possession; but since there is no such thing as an “ego,” there can be no such things as possessions. When people are able to realize this truth, they will be able to realize the truth of “non-duality.”

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People cherish the distinction of purity and impurity; but in the nature of things, there is no such distinction, except as it rises from false and absurd images in their mind.

In like manner people make a distinction between good and evil, but good and evil do not exist separately. Those who are following the path to Enlightenment recognize no such duality, and it leads them to neither praise the good and condemn the evil, nor despise the good and condone the evil.

People naturally fear misfortune and long for good fortune; but if the distinction is carefully studied, misfortune often turns out to be good fortune and good fortune to be misfortune. The wise man learns to meet the changing circumstances of life with an equitable spirit, being neither elated by success nor depressed by failure. Thus one realizes the truth of non-duality.

Therefore, all the words that express relations of duality – such as existence and non-existence, worldly-passions and true-knowledge, purity and impurity, good and evil – none of these terms of contrast in one's thinking are expressed or recognized in their true nature. When people keep free from such terms and from the emotions engendered by them, they realize Sunyata's universal truth.

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6. Just as the pure and fragrant lotus flower grows out of the mud of a swamp rather than out of the clean loam of an upland field, so from the muck of worldly passions springs the pure Enlightenment of Buddhahood. Even the mistaken views of heretics and the delusions of worldly passions may be the seeds for Buddhahood.

If a diver is to secure pearls he must descend to the bottom of the sea, braving all dangers of jagged coral and vicious sharks. So man must face the perils of worldly passion if he is to secure the precious pearl of Enlightenment. He must first be lost among the mountainous crags of egoism and selfishness, before there will awaken in him the desire to find a path that will lead him to Enlightenment.

There is a legend of a hermit who had such a great desire to find the true path that he climbed a mountain of swords and threw himself into fire, enduring them because of his hope. He who is willing to risk the perils of the path will find a cool breeze blowing on the sword-bridling mountains of selfishness and among the fires of hatred and, in the end, will come to realize that the selfishness and worldly passions against which he has struggled and suffered are Enlightenment itself.

7. Buddha's teaching leads us to non-duality, from the discriminating concept of two conflicting points of view. It

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is a mistake for people to seek a thing supposed to be good and right, and to flee from another supposed to be bad and evil.

If people insist that all things are empty and transitory, it is just as great a mistake to insist that all things are real and do not change. If a person becomes attached to his ego-personality, it is a mistake because it cannot save him from dissatisfaction or suffering. If he believes there is no ego, it is also a mistake and it would be useless for him to practice the Way of Truth. If people assert that everything is suffering, it is also a mistake; if they assert that everything is happiness, that is a mistake, too. Buddha teaches the Middle Way transcending these prejudiced concepts, where duality merges into oneness.

CHAPTER THREE
BUDDHA-NATURE

I
THE MIND OF PURITY

1. Among humans there are many kinds and degrees of mentality: some are wise, some are foolish, some are good-natured, some are bad-tempered, some are easily led, some are difficult to lead, some possess pure minds and some have minds that are defiled; but these differences are negligible when it comes to the attainment of Enlightenment. The world is like a lotus pond filled with many varieties of the plant; there are blossoms of many different tints. Some are white, some pink, some blue, some yellow; some grow under water, some spread their leaves on the water, and some raise their leaves above the water. Mankind has many more differences. There is the difference of sex, but it is not an essential difference, for, with proper training, both men and women may attain Enlightenment.

To be a trainer of elephants, one must possess five qualifications: good health, confidence, diligence, sincerity of purpose, and wisdom. To follow the Buddha's Noble Path to Enlightenment, one must have the same

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five good qualities. If one has these qualities, then regardless of gender, it is possible to attain Enlightenment. It need not take long to learn Buddha's teaching, for all humans possess a nature that has an affinity for Enlightenment.

2. In the practice of the way to Enlightenment, people see the Buddha with their own eyes and believe in Buddha with their own minds. The eyes that see Buddha and the mind that believes in Buddha are the same eyes and the same mind that, until that day, had wandered about in the world of birth and death.

If a king is plagued by bandits, he must find out where their camp is before he can attack them. So, when a man is beset by worldly passions, he should first ascertain their origins.

When a man is in a house and opens his eyes he will first notice the interior of the room and only later will he see the view outside the windows. In like manner we can not have the eye notice external things before there is recognition by the eye of the things in the house.

If there is a mind within the body, it ought first to know the things inside the body; but generally people are interested in external things and seem to know or care little for the things within the body.

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If the mind is located outside the body, it should not be in contact with the needs of the body. But, in fact, the body feels what the mind knows, and the mind knows what the body feels. Therefore, it can not be said that the human mind is outside of the body. Where, then, does the substance of the mind exist?

3. From the unknown past, being conditioned by their own deeds and deluded by two fundamental misconceptions, people have wandered about in ignorance.

First, they believed that the discriminating mind, which lies at the root of this life of birth and death, was their real nature; and, second, they did not know that, hidden behind the discriminating mind, they possessed a pure mind of Enlightenment which is their true nature.

When a man closes his fist and raises his arm, the eyes see it and the mind discriminates it, but the mind that discriminates it is not the true mind.

The discriminating mind is only a mind for the discrimination of imagined differences that greed and other moods relating to the self have created. The discriminating mind is subject to causes and conditions, it is empty of any self-substance, and it is constantly changing. But, since people believe that this mind is their real mind, the

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delusion enters into the causes and conditions that produce suffering.

A man opens his hand and the mind perceives it; but what is it that moves? Is it the mind, or is it the hand? Or is it neither of them? If the hand moves, then the mind moves accordingly, and vice versa; but the moving mind is only a superficial appearance of mind: it is not the true and fundamental mind.

4. Fundamentally, everyone has a pure clean mind, but it is usually covered by the defilement and dust of worldly desires which have arisen from one's circumstances. This defiled mind is not of the essence of one's nature: something has been added, like an intruder or even a guest in a home, but not its host.

The moon is often hidden by clouds, but it is not moved by them and its purity remains untarnished. Therefore, people must not be deluded into thinking that this defiled mind is their own true mind.

They must continually remind themselves of this fact by striving to awaken within themselves the pure and unchanging fundamental mind of Enlightenment. Being caught by a changing, defiled mind and being deluded by their own perverted ideas, they wander about in a world of delusion.

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The disturbances and defilements of the human mind are aroused by greed as well as by its reactions to the changing circumstances.

The mind that is not disturbed by things as they occur, that remains pure and tranquil under all circumstances, is the true mind and should be the master.

We cannot say that an inn disappears just because the guest is out of sight; neither can we say that the true self has disappeared when the defiled mind which has been aroused by the changing circumstances of life has disappeared. That which changes with changing conditions is not the true nature of mind.

5. Let us think of a lecture hall that is bright while the sun is shining but is dark after the sun goes down.

We can think of the light departing with the sun and the dark coming with the night, but we cannot so think of the mind that perceives lightness and darkness. The mind that is susceptible to lightness and darkness can not be given back to anybody; it can only revert to a truer nature which is its fundamental nature.

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It is only a “temporary” mind that momentarily notes changes of lightness and darkness as the sun rises and sets.

It is only a “temporary” mind that has different feelings from moment to moment with the changing circumstances of life; it is not the real and true mind. The fundamental and true mind which realizes the lightness and the darkness is the true nature of man.

The temporary feelings of good and evil, love and hatred, that have been aroused by surroundings and changing external conditions, are only momentary reactions that have their cause in the defilement accumulated by the human mind.

Behind the desires and worldly passions which the mind entertains, there abides, clear and undefiled, the fundamental and true essence of mind.

Water is round in a round receptacle and square in a square one, but water itself has no particular shape. People often forget this fact.

People see this good and that bad, they like this and dislike that, and they discriminate existence from non-existence; and then, being caught in these entanglements and becoming attached to them, they suffer.

Buddha-nature

If people would only give up their attachments to these imaginary and false discriminations, and restore the purity of their original minds, then both their mind and their body would be free from defilement and suffering; they would know the peacefulness that comes with that freedom.

II BUDDHA-NATURE

1. We have spoken of the pure and true mind as being fundamental; it is the Buddha-nature, that is, the seed of Buddhahood.

One can get fire if one holds a lens between the sun and moxa, but where does the fire come from? The lens is at an enormous distance from the sun, but the fire certainly appears upon the moxa by means of the lens. But if the moxa would not have the nature to kindle, there would be no fire.

In like manner, if the light of Buddha's Wisdom is concentrated upon the human mind, its true nature, which is Buddhahood, will be enkindled, and its light will illuminate the minds of the people with its brightness, and will awaken faith in Buddha. He holds the lens of Wisdom before all human minds and thus their faith may be quickened.

Buddha-nature

2. Often people disregard the affinity of their true minds for Buddha's enlightened wisdom, and, because of it, are caught by the entanglement of worldly passions, becoming attached to the discrimination of good and evil, and then lament over their bondage and suffering.

Why is it that people, possessing this fundamental and pure mind, should still cling to illusions and doom themselves to wander about in a world of delusion and suffering, covering their own Buddha-nature while all about them is the light of Buddha's Wisdom?

Once upon a time a man looked into the reverse side of a mirror and, not seeing his face and head, he became insane. How unnecessary it is for a man to become insane merely because he carelessly looks into the reverse side of a mirror!

It is just as foolish and unnecessary for a person to go on suffering because he does not attain Enlightenment where he expects to find it. There is no failure in Enlightenment; the failure lies in those people who, for a long time, have sought Enlightenment in their discriminating minds, not realizing that theirs are not true minds but are imaginary minds that have been caused by the accumulation of greed and illusion covering and hiding their true mind.

Buddha-nature

If the accumulation of false beliefs is cleared away, Enlightenment will appear. But, strange enough, when people attain Enlightenment, they will realize that without false beliefs there could be no Enlightenment.

3. Buddha-nature is not something that comes to an end. Though wicked men should be born beasts or hungry demons, or fall into hell, they never lose their Buddha-nature.

However buried in the defilement of flesh or concealed at the root of worldly desires and forgotten it may be, the human affinity for Buddhahood is never completely extinguished.

4. There is an old story told of a man who fell into a drunken sleep. His friend stayed by him as long as he could but, being compelled to go and fearing that he might be in want, the friend hid a jewel in the drunken man's garment. When the drunken man recovered, not knowing that his friend had hid a jewel in his garment, he wandered about in poverty and hunger. A long time afterwards the two men met again and the friend told the poor man about the jewel and advised him to look for it.

Like the drunken man of the story, people wander about suffering in this life of birth and death, unconscious of what is hidden away in their inner nature, pure

Buddha-nature

and untarnished, the priceless treasure of Buddha-nature.

However unconscious people may be of the fact that everyone has within his possession this supreme nature, and however degraded and ignorant they may be, Buddha never loses faith in them because He knows that even in the least of them there are, potentially, all the virtues of Buddhahood.

So Buddha awakens faith in them who are deceived by ignorance and cannot see their own Buddha-nature, leads them away from their illusions and teaches them that originally there is no difference between themselves and Buddhahood.

5. Buddha is one who has attained Buddhahood and people are those who are capable of attaining Buddhahood; that is all the difference that lies between them.

But if a man thinks that he has attained Enlightenment, he is deceiving himself, for, although he may be moving in that direction, he has not yet reached Buddhahood.

Buddha-nature does not appear without diligent and faithful effort, nor is the task finished until Buddhahood

is attained.

6. Once upon a time a king gathered some blind men about an elephant and asked them to tell him what an elephant was like. The first man felt a tusk and said an elephant was like a giant carrot; another happened to touch an ear and said it was like a big fan; another touched its trunk and said it was like a pestle; still another, who happened to feel its leg, said it was like a mortar; and another, who grasped its tail said it was like a rope. Not one of them was able to tell the king the elephant's real form.

In like manner, one might partially describe the nature of man but would not be able to describe the true nature of a human being, the Buddha-nature.

There is only one possible way by which the everlasting nature of man, his Buddha-nature, that can not be disturbed by worldly desires or destroyed by death, can be realized, and that is by the Buddha and the Buddha's noble teaching.

III EGOLESSNESS

1. We have been speaking of Buddha-nature as though it were something that could be described, as though it

Buddha-nature

were similar to the “soul” of other teachings, but it is not.

The concept of an “ego-personality” is something that has been imagined by a discriminating mind which first grasped it and then became attached to it, but which must abandon it. On the contrary, Buddha-nature is something indescribable that must first be discovered. In one sense, it resembles an “ego-personality” but it is not the “ego” in the sense of “I am” or “mine.”

To believe in the existence of an ego is an erroneous belief that supposes the existence of non-existence; to deny Buddha-nature is wrong, for it supposes that existence is non-existence.

This can be explained in a parable. A mother took her sick child to a doctor. The doctor gave the child medicine and instructed the mother not to nurse the child until the medicine was digested.

The mother anointed her breast with something bitter so that the child would keep away from her of his own volition. After the medicine had time enough to be digested, the mother cleansed her breast and let the child suck her. The mother took this method of saving her child out of kindness because she loved the child.

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Like the mother in the parable, Buddha, in order to remove misunderstanding and to break up attachments to an ego-personality, denies the existence of an ego; and when the misunderstanding and attachments are done away with, then He explains the reality of the true mind that is the Buddha-nature.

Attachment to an ego-personality leads people into delusions, but faith in their Buddha-nature leads them to Enlightenment.

It is like the woman in a story to whom a chest was bequeathed. Not knowing that the chest contained gold, she continued to live in poverty until another person opened it and showed her the gold. Buddha opens the minds of people and shows them the purity of their Buddha-nature.

2. If everyone has this Buddha-nature, why is there so much suffering from people cheating one another or killing one another? And why are there so many distinctions of rank and wealth, rich and poor?

There is a story of a wrestler who used to wear an ornament on his forehead of a precious stone. One time when he was wrestling the stone was crushed into the flesh of his forehead. He thought he had lost the gem and went to a surgeon to have the wound dressed. When the

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surgeon came to dress the wound he found the gem embedded in the flesh and covered over with blood and dirt. He held up a mirror and showed the stone to the wrestler.

Buddha-nature is like the precious stone of this story: it becomes covered over by the dirt and dust of other interests and people think that they have lost it, but a good teacher recovers it again for them.

Buddha-nature exists in everyone no matter how deeply it may be covered over by greed, anger and foolishness, or buried by his own deeds and retribution. Buddha-nature can not be lost or destroyed; and when all defilements are removed, sooner or later it will reappear.

Like the wrestler in the story who was shown the gem buried in his flesh and blood by means of a mirror, so people are shown their Buddha-nature, buried beneath their worldly desires and passions, by means of the light of Buddha.

3. Buddha-nature is always pure and tranquil no matter how varied the conditions and surroundings of people may be. Just as milk is always white regardless of the color of the cow's hide, either red, white, or black, so it

Buddha-nature

does not matter how differently their deeds may condition people's life or what different effects may follow their acts and thoughts.

There is a fable told in India of a mysterious medical herb that was hidden under the tall grasses of the Himalayas. For a long time men sought for it in vain, but at last a wise man located it by its sweetness. As long as the wise man lived he collected this medical herb in a tub, but after his death, the sweet elixir remained hidden in some far-off spring in the mountains, and the water in the tub turned sour and harmful and of a different taste.

In like manner Buddha-nature is hidden away beneath the wild growth of worldly passions and can rarely be discovered, but Buddha found it and revealed it to the people, and as they receive it by their varying faculties it tastes differently to each person.

4. The diamond, the hardest of known substances, cannot be crushed. Sand and stones can be ground to powder but diamonds remain unscathed. Buddha-nature is like the diamond, and thus cannot be broken.

Human nature, both its body and mind, will wear away, but the nature of Buddhahood can not be destroyed.

Buddha-nature

Buddha-nature is, indeed, the most excellent characteristic of human nature. Buddha teaches that, although in human nature there may be endless varieties such as men and women, there is no discrimination with regard to Buddha-nature.

Pure gold is procured by melting ore and removing all impure substances. If people would melt the ore of their minds and remove all the impurities of worldly passion and egoism, they would all recover the same pure Buddha-nature.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEFILEMENTS

I

HUMAN DEFILEMENTS

1. There are two kinds of worldly passions that defile and cover the purity of Buddha-nature.

The first is the passion for analysis and discussion by which people become confused in judgment. The second is the passion for emotional experience by which people's values become confused.

Both delusions of reasoning and delusions of practice can be thought of as a classification of all human defilements, but really there are two original worldly predicaments in their bases. The first is ignorance, and the second is desire.

The delusions of reasoning are based upon ignorance, and the delusions of practice are based upon desire, so that the two sets are really one set after all, and together they are the source of all unhappiness.

If people are ignorant they cannot reason correctly and safely. As they yield to a desire for existence, grasp-

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ings, clingings and attachments to everything inevitably follow. It is this constant hunger for every pleasant thing seen and heard that leads people into the delusions of habit. Some people even yield to the desire for the death of the body.

From these primary sources all greed, anger, foolishness, misunderstanding, resentment, jealousy, flattery, deceit, pride, contempt, inebriety, selfishness, have their generations and appearances.

2. Greed rises from wrong ideas of satisfaction; anger rises from wrong ideas concerning the state of one's affairs and surroundings; foolishness rises from the inability to judge what correct conduct is.

These three – greed, anger and foolishness – are called the three fires of the world. The fire of greed consumes those who have lost their true minds through greed; the fire of anger consumes those who have lost their true minds through anger; the fire of foolishness consumes those who have lost their true minds through their failure to hear and to heed the teachings of Buddha.

Indeed, this world is burning up with its many and various fires. There are fires of greed, fires of anger, fires

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of foolishness, fires of infatuation and egoism, fires of decrepitude, sickness and death, fires of sorrow, lamentation, suffering and agony. Everywhere these fires are raging. They not only burn the self, but also cause others to suffer and lead them into wrong acts of body, speech and mind. From the wounds that are caused by these fires there issues a pus that infects and poisons those who approach it, and leads them into evil paths.

3. Greed rises in want of satisfaction; anger rises in want of dissatisfaction; and foolishness rises from impure thoughts. The evil of greed has little impurity but is hard to remove; the evil of anger has more impurity but is easy to remove; the evil of foolishness has much impurity and is very hard to overcome.

Therefore, people should quench these fires whenever and wherever they appear by correctly judging as to what can give true satisfaction, by strictly controlling the mind in the face of the unsatisfactory things of life, and by ever recalling Buddha's teachings of good-will and kindness. If the mind is filled with wise and pure and unselfish thoughts, there will be no place for worldly passions to take root.

4. Greed, anger and foolishness are like a fever. If a

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man gets this fever, even if he lies in a comfortable room, he will suffer and be tormented by sleeplessness.

Those who have no such fever have no difficulty in sleeping peacefully, even on a cold winter night, on the ground with only a thin covering of leaves, or on a hot summer's night in a small closed room.

These three – greed, anger and foolishness – are, therefore, the sources of all human woe. To get rid of these sources of woe, one must observe the precepts, must practice concentration of mind and must have wisdom. Observance of the precepts will remove the impurities of greed; right concentration of mind will remove the impurities of anger; and wisdom will remove the impurities of foolishness.

5. Human desires are endless. It is like the thirst of a person who drinks salt water: one gets no satisfaction and one's thirst is only increased.

So it is with a person who seeks to gratify one's desires; one only gains increased dissatisfaction and one's woes are multiplied.

The gratification of desires never satisfies; it always leaves behind unrest and irritation that can never be allayed, and then, if the gratification of one's desires is thwarted, it will often drive one "insane."

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To satisfy their desires, people will struggle and fight with each other, king against king, vassal against vassal, parent against child, brother against brother, sister against sister, friend against friend; they will fight and even kill each other to satisfy their desires.

People often ruin their lives in the attempt to satisfy desires. They will steal and cheat and commit adultery, and then, being caught, will suffer from the disgrace of it and its punishment.

They will sin with their own bodies and words, sin with their own minds, knowing perfectly well that the gratification will ultimately bring unhappiness and suffering, so imperious is desire. And then, the various sufferings in the following world and the agonies of falling into it follow.

6. Of all the worldly passions, lust is the most intense. All other worldly passions seem to follow in its train.

Lust seems to provide the soil in which other passions flourish. Lust is like a demon that eats up all the good deeds of the world. Lust is a viper hiding in a flower garden; it poisons those who come in search only of beauty. Lust is a vine that climbs a tree and spreads over

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the branches until the tree is strangled. Lust insinuates its tentacles into human emotions and sucks away the good sense of the mind until the mind withers. Lust is a bait cast by the evil demon that foolish people snap at and are dragged down by into the depths of the evil world.

If a dry bone is smeared with blood a dog will gnaw at it until it is tired and frustrated. Lust to a human is precisely like this bone to a dog; one will covet it until one is exhausted.

If a single piece of meat is thrown to two wild beasts they will fight and claw each other to get it. A person foolish enough to carry a torch against the wind will likely burn himself. Like these two beasts and this foolish person, people hurt and burn themselves because of their worldly desires.

7. It is easy to shield the outer body from poisoned arrows, but it is impossible to shield the mind from the poisoned darts that originate within itself. Greed, anger, foolishness and the infatuations of egoism – these four poisoned darts originate within the mind and infect it with deadly poison.

If people are infected with greed, anger and foolishness, they will lie, cheat, abuse and be double-tongued, and, then will actualize their words by killing, stealing

and committing adultery.

These three evil states of mind, the four evil utterances, and the three evil acts, if added together, become the ten gross evils.

If people become accustomed to lying, they will unconsciously commit every possible wrong deed. Before they can act wickedly they must lie, and once they begin to lie they will act wickedly with unconcern.

Greed, lust, fear, anger, misfortune and unhappiness all derive from foolishness. Thus, foolishness is the greatest of the poisons.

8. From desire action follows; from action suffering follows; desire, action and suffering are like a wheel rotating endlessly.

The rolling of this wheel has no beginning and no end; people cannot escape such reincarnation. One life follows another life according to this transmigrating cycle in endless recurrence.

If one were to pile the ashes and bones of oneself burnt in this everlasting transmigration, the pile would be

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mountain high; if one were to collect the milk of mothers which he suckled during his transmigration, it would be deeper than the sea.

Although the nature of Buddhahood is possessed by all people, it is buried so deeply in the defilements of worldly passion that it long remains unknown. That is why suffering is so universal and why there is this endless recurrence of miserable lives.

II HUMAN NATURE

1. Human nature is like a dense thicket that has no entrance and is difficult to penetrate. In comparison, the nature of an animal is much easier to understand. Still, we can in a general way classify human nature according to four outstanding differences.

First, there are those who, because of wrong teachings, practice austerities and cause themselves to suffer. Second, there are those who, by cruelty, by stealing, by

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killing, or by other unkind acts, cause others to suffer. Third, there are those who cause other people to suffer along with themselves. Fourth, there are those who do not suffer themselves and save others from suffering. These people of the last category, by following the teachings of Buddha, do not give way to greed, anger or foolishness, but live peaceful lives of kindness and wisdom without killing or stealing.

2. There are three kinds of people in the world. The first are those who are like letters carved in rock; they easily give way to anger and retain their angry thoughts for a long time. The second are those who are like letters written in sand; they give way to anger also, but their angry thoughts quickly pass away. The third is those who are like letters written in running water; they do not retain their passing thoughts; they let abuse and uncomfortable gossip pass by unnoticed; their minds are always pure and undisturbed.

There are three other kinds of people. The first are those who are proud, act rashly and are never satisfied; their natures are easy to understand. Then there are those who are courteous and always act after consideration; their natures are hard to understand. Then there are those who have overcome desire completely; it is impossible to understand their natures.

Thus people can be classified in many different

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ways, but nevertheless, their natures are hard to understand. Only Buddha understands them and, by His wisdom, leads them through varied teachings.

III HUMAN LIFE

1. There is an allegory that depicts human life. Once there was a man rowing a boat down a river. Someone on the shore warned him, “Stop rowing so gaily down the swift current; there are rapids ahead and a dangerous whirlpool, and there are crocodiles and demons lying in wait in rocky caverns. You will perish if you continue.”

In this allegory, “the swift current” is a life of lust; “rowing gaily” is giving rein to one’s passion; “rapids ahead” means the ensuing suffering and pain; “whirlpool” means pleasure, “crocodiles and demons” refers to the decay and death that follow a life of lust and indulgence; “Someone on the shore,” who calls out, is Buddha.

Here is another allegory. A man who has committed a crime is running away; some guards are following him, so he tries to hide himself by descending into a well by means of some vines growing down the sides. As he descends he sees vipers at the bottom of the well, so he

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decides to cling to the vine for safety. After a time when his arms are getting tired, he notices two mice, one white and the other black, gnawing at the vine.

If the vine breaks, he will fall to the vipers and perish. Suddenly, on looking upward, he notices just above his face a bee-hive from which occasionally falls a drop of honey. The man, forgetting all his danger, tastes the honey with delight.

“A man” means the one who is born to suffer and to die alone. “Guards” and “vipers” refer to the body with all its desires. “Vines” means the continuity of the human life. “Two mice, one white and the other black” refer to the duration of time, days and nights, and the passing years. “Honey” indicates the physical pleasures that beguiles the suffering of the passing years.

2. Here is still another allegory. A king places four vipers in a box and gives the box into the safekeeping of a servant. He commands the servant to take good care of them and warns that if he angers even one of them he will be punished with death. The servant, in fear, decides to throw away the box and escape.

The king sends five guards to capture the servant. At first they approach the servant in a friendly manner, intending to take him back safely, but the servant does

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not trust their friendliness and escapes to another village.

Then, in a vision, a voice tells him that in this village there is no safe shelter, and that there are six bandits who will attack him, so the servant runs away in fright until he comes to a wild river that blocks his way. Thinking of the dangers that are following him, he makes a raft and succeeds in crossing the turbulent current, beyond which he finally finds safety and peace.

“Four vipers in a box” indicate the four elements of earth, water, fire and air that make up the body of flesh. The body is given into the charge of lust and is an enemy of the mind. Therefore, he tries to run away from the body.

“Five guards who approach in friendly manner” mean the five aggregates-form, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness-which frame body and mind.

“The safe shelter” is the six senses, which are no safe shelter after all, and “the six bandits” are the six objects of the six senses. Thus, seeing the dangers within the six senses, he runs away once more and comes to the wild current of worldly desires.

Then he makes himself a raft of the Buddha’s good teachings and crosses the wild current safely.

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3. There are three occasions full of perils when a son is helpless to aid his mother and a mother cannot help her son:-a fire, a flood and a burglary. Yet, even on these perilous and sad occasions, there still exists a chance for aiding each other.

But there are three occasions when it is impossible for a mother to save her son or a son to save his mother. These three occasions are the time of sickness, the period of growing old, and the moment of death.

How can a son take his mother's place when she is growing old? How can a mother take her son's place when he is sick? How can either help the other when the moment of death approaches? No matter how much they may love each other or how intimate they may have been, neither can help the other on such occasions.

4. Once Yama, the legendary King of Hell, asked a man who had fallen into hell about his evil deeds in life, whether, during his life, he had ever met the three heavenly messengers. The man replied: "No, my Lord, I never met any such persons."

Yama asked him if he had ever met an old person bent with age and walking with a cane. The man replied: "Yes, my Lord, I have met such persons frequently." Then Yama said to him: "You are suffering this present punish-

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ment because you did not recognize in that old man a heavenly messenger sent to warn you that you must quickly change your ways before you, too, become an old man.”

Yama asked him again if he had ever seen a poor, sick and friendless man. The man replied: “Yes, my Lord, I have seen many such men.” Then, Yama said to him: “You have come into this place because you failed to recognize in these sick men the messengers from heaven sent to warn you of your own sickness.”

Then, Yama asked him once more if he had ever seen a dead man. The man replied: “Yes, my Lord, I have been in the presence of death many times.” Yama said to him: “It is because you did not recognize in these men the heavenly messengers sent to warn you that you are brought to this. If you had recognized these messengers and taken their warnings you would have changed your course, and would not have come to this place of suffering.”

5. Once there was a young woman named Kisagotami, the wife of a wealthy man, who lost her mind because of the death of her child. She took the dead child in her arms and went from house to house begging people to heal the child.

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Of course, they could do nothing for her, but finally a follower of Buddha advised her to see the Blessed One who was then staying at Jetavana, and so she carried the dead child to Buddha.

The Blessed One looked upon her with sympathy and said: "To heal the child I need some poppy seeds; go and beg four or five poppy seeds from some home where death has never entered."

So the demented woman went out and sought a house where death had never entered, but in vain. At last, she was obliged to return to Buddha. In his quiet presence her mind cleared and she understood the meaning of his words. She took the body away and buried it, and then returned to Buddha and became one of his disciples.

IV REALITY OF HUMAN LIFE

1. People in this world are prone to be selfish and unsympathetic; they do not know how to love and respect one another; they argue and quarrel over trifling affairs only to their own harm and suffering, and life becomes but a dreary round of unhappinesses.

Regardless of whether they are rich or poor, they

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worry about money; they suffer from poverty and they suffer from wealth. Because their lives are controlled by greed, they are never contented, never satisfied.

A wealthy man worries about his estate if he has one; he worries about his mansion and all other possessions. He worries lest some disaster befall him, his mansion burn down, robbers break in, kidnappers carry him off. Then he worries about death and the disposition of his wealth. Indeed, his way to death is lonely, and nobody follows him to death.

A poor man always suffers from insufficiency and this serves to awaken endless desires - for land and a house. Being aflamed with covetousness he wears out both his body and mind, and comes to death in the middle of his life.

The whole world seems pitted against him and even the path to death seems lonesome as though he has a long journey to make and no friends to keep him company.

2. Now, there are five evils in the world. First, there is cruelty; every creature, even insects, strives against one another. The strong attack the weak; the weak deceive the strong; everywhere there is fighting and cruelty.

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Second, there is the lack of a clear demarcation between the rights of a father and a son; between an elder brother and a younger; between a husband and a wife; between a senior relative and a younger; on every occasion each one desires to be the highest and to profit off the others. They cheat each other, there is deception and a lack of sincerity.

Third, there is the lack of a clear demarcation as to the behavior between men and women. Everyone at times has impure and lascivious thoughts and desires that lead them into questionable acts and often into disputes, fighting, injustice and wickedness.

Fourth, there is the tendency for people to disrespect the rights of others, to exaggerate their own importance at the expense of others, to set bad examples of behavior and, being unjust in their speech, to deceive, slander and abuse others.

Fifth, there is the tendency for people to neglect their duties toward others. They think too much of their own comfort and their own desires; they forget the favors they have received and cause annoyance to others that often passes into great injustice.

3. People should have more sympathy for one another; they should respect one another for their good traits and

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help one another in their difficulties; but, instead, they are selfish and hard-hearted; they despise one another for their failings and dislike others for their advantages. These aversions generally grow worse with time, and after a while, become intolerable.

These feelings of dislike do not soon end in acts of violence; yet they poison life with feelings of hatred and anger that become so deeply carved into the mind that people carry the marks into the cycle of reincarnation.

Truly, in this world of lust, a person is born alone and dies alone, and there is no one to share one's punishment in the life after death.

The law of cause and effect is universal; each person must carry one's own burden of sin and must go along to its retribution. The same law of cause and effect controls good deeds. A life of sympathy and kindness will result in good fortune and happiness.

4. As years go by and people see how strongly they are bound by greed, habit and suffering, they become very sad and discouraged. Often in their discouragement they quarrel with others and sink deeper into sin and give up trying to walk the true path; often their lives come to some untimely end in the very midst of their wickedness

and they suffer forever.

This falling into discouragement because of one's misfortunes and sufferings is most unnatural and contrary to the law of heaven and earth and, therefore, one will suffer both in this world and in the worlds after death.

It is true that everything in this life is transitory and filled with uncertainty, but it is lamentable that anyone should ignore this fact and keep on trying to seek enjoyment and satisfaction of his desires.

5. It is natural in this world of suffering for people to think and act selfishly and egoistically and, because of it, it is equally natural for suffering and unhappiness to follow.

People favor themselves and neglect others. People let their own desires run into greed and lust and all manner of evil. Because of these they must suffer endlessly.

Times of luxury do not last long, but pass away very quickly; nothing in this world can be enjoyed forever.

6. Therefore, people should cast away, while they are young and healthy, all their greed and attachment to

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worldly affairs, and should seek earnestly for true Enlightenment, for there can be no lasting reliance or happiness apart from Enlightenment.

Most people, however, disbelieve or ignore this law of cause and effect. They go on in their habits of greed and selfishness, being oblivious of the fact that a good deed brings happiness and an evil deed brings misfortune. Nor do they really believe that one's acts in this life condition the following lives and implicate others with regard to the rewards and punishments for their sins.

They lament and cry about their sufferings, entirely misunderstanding the significance their present acts have upon their following lives and the relation their sufferings have to the acts of their previous lives. They think only of present desire and present suffering.

Nothing in the world is permanent or lasting; everything is changing and momentary and unpredictable. But people are ignorant and selfish, and are concerned only with the desires and sufferings of the passing moment. They do not listen to the good teachings nor do they try to understand them; they simply give themselves up to the present interest, to wealth and lust.

7. From time immemorial, an incalculable number of people have been born into this world of delusion and suf-

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fering, and they are still being born. It is fortunate, however, that the world has the Buddha's teachings and that people can believe in them and be helped.

Therefore, people should think deeply, should keep their minds pure and their bodies well, should keep away from greed and evil, and should seek good.

To us, fortunately, the knowledge of the Buddha's teachings has come; we should seek to believe in them and wish to be born in the Buddha's Pure Land. Knowing Buddha's teachings, we should not follow others into greedy and sinful ways, nor should we keep the Buddha's teachings to ourselves alone, but should practice the teachings and pass them on to others.

CHAPTER FIVE

**THE RELIEF OFFERED
BY BUDDHA**

I

AMIDA BUDDHA'S VOWS

1. As already explained, people always yield to their worldly passions, repeating sin after sin, and carry burdens of intolerable acts, unable of their own wisdom or of their own strength to break these habits of greed and indulgence. If they are unable to overcome and remove worldly passions, how can they expect to realize their true nature of Buddhahood?

Buddha, who thoroughly understood human nature, had great sympathy for people and made a vow that He would do everything possible, even at the cost of great hardship to Himself, to relieve them of their fears and sufferings. To effect this relief He manifested himself as a Bodhisattva in the immemorial past and made the following ten vows:

(a) “Though I attain Buddhahood, I shall never be complete until everyone in my land is certain of entering Buddhahood and gaining Enlightenment.”

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(b) “Though I attain Buddhahood, I shall never be complete until my affirming light reaches all over the world.”

(c) “Though I attain Buddhahood, I shall never be complete until my life endures through the ages and saves innumerable numbers of people.”

(d) “Though I attain Buddhahood, I shall never be complete until all the Buddhas in the ten directions unite in praising my name.”

(e) “Though I attain Buddhahood, I shall never be complete until people with sincere faith endeavor to be reborn in my land by repeating my name in sincere faith ten times and actually do succeed in this rebirth.”

(f) “Though I attain Buddhahood, I shall never be complete until people everywhere determine to attain Enlightenment, practice virtues, sincerely wish to be born in my land; thus, I shall appear at the moment of their death with a great company of Bodhisattvas to welcome them into my Pure Land.”

(g) “Though I attain Buddhahood, I shall never be complete until people everywhere, hearing my name, think of my land and wish to be born there and, to that end, sincerely plant seeds of virtue, and are thus able to

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accomplish all to their hearts' desire."

(h) "Though I attain Buddhahood, I shall never be complete until all those who are born in my Pure Land attain the rank in which they become Buddha in the next life. Exception to this are those who, based on their personal vow, wear the armor of great vow for the sake of people, strive for the benefit and peace of the world, lead innumerable people to enlightenment, and cultivate the merit of great compassion."

(i) "Though I attain Buddhahood, I shall never be complete until people all over the world are influenced by my spirit of loving compassion that will purify their minds and bodies and lift them above the things of the world."

(j) "Though I attain Buddhahood, I shall never be complete until people everywhere, hearing my name, learn right ideas about life and death, and gain that perfect wisdom that will keep their minds pure and tranquil in the midst of the world's greed and suffering."

"Thus I make these vows; may I not attain Buddhahood until they are fulfilled. May I become the source of unlimited Light, freeing and radiating the treasures of my wisdom and virtue, enlightening all lands and emancipating all suffering people."

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2. Thus He, by accumulating innumerable virtues through many eons of time, became Amida or the Buddha of Infinite Light and Boundless Life, and perfected his own Buddha-land of Purity, wherein He is now living, in a world of peace, enlightening all people.

This Pure Land, wherein there is no suffering, is, indeed, most peaceful and happy. Clothing, food and all beautiful things appear when those who live there wish for them. When a gentle breeze passes through its jewel-laden trees, the music of its holy teachings fills the air and cleanses the minds of all who listen to it.

In this Pure Land there are many fragrant lotus blossoms, and each blossom has many precious petals, and each petal shines with ineffable beauty. The radiance of these lotus blossoms brightens the path of Wisdom, and those who listen to the music of the holy teaching are led into perfect peace.

3. Now all the Buddhas of the ten directions are praising the virtues of this Buddha of Infinite Light and Boundless Life.

Whoever hears this Buddha's Name magnifies and receives it with joy, his mind becomes one with Buddha's mind and he will be born in the Buddha's wondrous Land of Purity.

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Those who are born in that Pure Land share in Buddha's boundless life; their hearts are immediately filled with sympathy for all sufferers and they go forward to manifest the Buddha's method of salvation.

In the spirit of these vows they cast away all worldly attachments and realize the impermanence of this world. And they devote their merits to the emancipation of all sentient life; they integrate their own lives with the lives of all others, sharing their illusions and sufferings but, at the same time, realizing their freedom from the bonds and attachments of this worldly life.

They know the hindrances and difficulties of worldly living but they know, also, the boundless potentialities of Buddha's compassion. They are free to go or come, they are free to advance or to stop as they wish, but they choose to remain with those upon whom Buddha has compassion.

Therefore, if anyone hearing the Name of this Amida Buddha is encouraged to call upon that Name in perfect faith, he shall share in Buddha's compassion. So all people should listen to the Buddha's teaching and should follow it even if it seems to lead them again through the flames that envelop this world of life and death.

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If people truly and earnestly wish to attain Enlightenment, they must rely on the power of this Buddha. It is impossible for an ordinary person to realize his supreme Buddha-nature without the support of this Buddha.

4. Amida Buddha is not far from anyone. His Land of Purity is described as being far away to the west but it is, also, within the minds of those who earnestly wish to be with him.

When some people picture in their minds the figure of Amida Buddha shining in golden splendor, the picture divides into eighty-four thousand figures or features, each figure or feature emitting eighty-four thousand rays of light and each ray of light, enlightening a world, never leaving in darkness a single person who is reciting the name of Buddha. Thus this Buddha helps people take advantage of the salvation He offers.

By seeing the image of Buddha, one is enabled to realize the mind of Buddha. The Buddha's mind has great compassion that includes all, even those who are ignorant of his compassion or forgetful of it, much more those who remember it in faith.

To those who have faith, He offers the opportunity to become one with Him. As this Buddha is the all-inclu-

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sive body of equality, whoever thinks of Buddha, Buddha thinks of him and enters his mind freely.

This means that, when a person thinks of Buddha, he has Buddha's mind in all its pure and happy and peaceful perfection. In other words, his mind is a Buddha-mind.

Therefore, each man in purity and sincerity of faith, should picture his own mind as being Buddha's mind.

5. Buddha has many forms of transfiguration and incarnation, and can manifest Himself in manifold ways according to the ability of each person.

He manifests his body in immense size to cover all the sky and stretches away into the boundless stellar spaces. He also manifests Himself in the infinitesimals of nature, sometimes in forms, sometimes in energy, sometimes in aspects of mind, and sometimes in personality.

But in some manner or other, He will surely appear to those who recite the name of Buddha with faith. To such, Amida always appears accompanied by two Bodhisattvas: Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and Mahasthamaprapta, the Bodhisattva of

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Wisdom. His manifestations fill up the world for everyone to see but only those who have faith notice them.

Those who are able to see His temporal manifestations acquire abiding satisfaction and happiness. Moreover, those who are able to see the real Buddha realize incalculable fortunes of joy and peace.

6. Since the mind of Amida Buddha with all its boundless potentialities of love and wisdom is compassion itself, Buddha can save all.

The most wicked of people – those who commit unbelievable crimes, whose minds are filled with greed, anger and infatuation; those who lie, chatter, abuse and cheat; those who kill, steal and act lasciviously; those who are near the end of their lives after years of evil deeds — they are destined to long ages of punishment.

A good friend comes to them and pleads with them at their last moment, saying, “You are now facing death; you cannot blot out your life of wickedness, but you can take refuge in the compassion of the Buddha of Infinite Light by reciting His Name.

If these wicked men recite the holy name of Amida Buddha with singleness of mind, all the sins which would

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have destined them to the evil world will be cleared away.

If simply repeating the holy name can do this, how much more would be possible if one is able to concentrate his mind upon this Buddha!

Those who are thus able to recite the holy name, when they come to the end of life, will be met by Amida Buddha and the Bodhisattvas of Compassion and Wisdom and will be led by them into the Buddha's Land, where they will be born in all purity of the white lotus.

Therefore, everyone should keep in mind the words, "Namu-Amida-Butsu" or Whole-hearted Reliance upon the Buddha of Infinite Light and Boundless Life!

II

AMIDA BUDDHA'S LAND OF PURITY

1. The Buddha of Infinite Light and Boundless Life is ever living and ever radiating His Truth. In His Pure Land there is no suffering and no darkness, and every hour is passed in joy; therefore, it is called the Land of Bliss.

In the midst of this Land there is a lake of pure water, fresh and sparkling, whose waves lap softly on shores of golden sands. Here and there are huge lotus

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blossoms as large as chariot wheels of many and various lights and colors — blue lights from blue color, yellow for yellow, red for red, white for white — whose fragrance fills the air.

At different places on the margin of the lake there are pavilions decorated with gold and silver, lapis lazuli and crystal, with marble steps leading down to the water's edge. At other places there are parapets and balustrades hanging over the water and enclosed with curtains and networks of precious gems, and in between there are groves of spices trees and flowering shrubs.

The ground is shining with beauty and the air is vibrant with celestial harmonies. Six times during the day and night, delicately tinted flower petals fall from the sky and people gather them and carry them in flower vessels to all the other Buddha-lands and make offerings of them to the myriad Buddhas.

2. In this wondrous Land there are many birds. There are snow-white storks and swans, and gaily colored peacocks and tropical birds of paradise, and flocks of little birds, softly singing. In the Buddha's Pure Land these sweetly singing birds are voicing Buddha's teachings and praising His virtues.

Whoever hears and listens to the music of these

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voices, listens to the Buddha's voice and awakens to a newness of faith, joy and peace in fellowship with the brotherhood of followers everywhere.

Soft zephyrs pass through the trees of that Pure Land and stir the fragrant curtains of the Pavilions and pass away in sweet cadences of music.

People hearing faint echoes of this heavenly music think of the Buddha, of the Dharma (teaching), and of the Samgha (brotherhood). All these excellences are but reflections of the Pure Land.

3. Why is Buddha in this land called Amida, indicating the Buddha of Infinite Light and Boundless Life? It is because the splendor of His Truth radiates unimpeded to the outermost and innermost limits of the Buddha-lands; it is because the vitality of His living compassion never wanes through the incalculable lives and eons of time.

It is because the number of those who are born in His Pure Land and are perfectly enlightened is incalculable and they will never again return to the world of delusions and death.

It is because the number of those who are awakened into the newness of Life by His Light is also incalculable.

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Therefore, should all people concentrate their minds on His Name and, as they come toward the end of life, even for one day or seven days, recite Amida Buddha's Name in perfect faith, and they do this with undisturbed mind, they will be born in the Buddha's Land of Purity, being led by Amida Buddha and many other holy ones who appear at this last moment.

If any person hears Amida Buddha's Name, awakens one's faith in His teachings, one will be able to attain unsurpassed perfect Enlightenment.

