

20. "With the fire of passion say I, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of infatuation ; with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair are they on fire."

21. "The ear is on fire ; sounds are on fire ; the nose is on fire ; odours are on fire ; the tongue is on fire ; tastes are on fire ; the body is on fire ; ideas are on fire ; and whatever sensation, pleasant, unpleasant, or indifferent, originates in dependence on impression received by the mind, that also is on fire.

22. "And with what are these on fire ?"

23. "With the fire of passion, say I ; with the fire of hatred ; with the fire of infatuation ; with birth ; old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair are they on fire."

24. "Perceiving this, O Bhikkus, the learned and noble conceives an aversion. And in conceiving this aversion, he becomes divested of passion, and by the absence of passion he becomes free, and when he is free he becomes aware that he is free."

25. How can Nibbana give happiness ? That is the next question which calls for explanation.

26. The common notion is that man is unhappy because he is in want. But this is not always true. Man is unhappy even though he is in the midst of plenty.

27. Unhappiness is the result of greed, and greed is the bane of life of those who have as well as of those who have not.

28. This the Buddha has made clear in a sermon delivered to the Bhikkus in which he said.

29. "Excited by greed (lobha), brothers, furious with anger (dosa), blinded by delusion (moha), with mind overwhelmed, with mind enslaved, men reflect upon their own misfortune, men reflect upon the misfortune of others, men experience mental suffering and anguish.

30. If, however, greed, anger and delusion are done away, men reflect neither upon their own misfortune nor on mental suffering and anguish.

31. Thus, brothers, is Nibbana visible in this





life and not merely in the future ; inviting, attractive, accessible to the wise disciple.”

32. Herein lies the explanation of what consumes man and makes him unhappy. By using this analogy of burning fire to the working of human passions the Buddha has given the most forceful explanation for the unhappiness of man.

33. What makes man unhappy is his falling a prey to his passions. These passions are called fetters which prevent a man from reaching the state of Nibbana. The moment he is free from the sway of his passions, i.e., he learns to achieve Nibbana, man's way to happiness is open to him.

34. These passions, according to the Buddha's analysis, fall under three groups.

35. First : that which refers to all degrees of craving or attachment—such as lust, infatuation and greed (lobha).

36. Second: that which refers to all degrees of antipathy—hatred, anger, vexation or repugnance (dosa).

37. Third: that which refers to all degrees of ignorance—delusion, dullness and stupidity (moha or avidya).

38. The first and second fires relate to the emotions and over the whole scale of one's attitudes and feelings towards other beings, while the third fire relates to all ideas that are in any way removed from the truth.

39. There are certain misunderstandings about the Buddha's doctrine of Nibbana.

40. The word Nibbana etymologically means out blowing, extinguishing.

41. Taking hold of this root meaning of the word, critics have tried to make nonsense of the doctrine of Nibbana.

42. They hold that Nibbana means extinction of all human passions which is equivalent to death.

43 They have by this means tried to throw ridicule over the doctrine of Nibbana.

44. That such is not the meaning of Nibbana

is quite clear if one examines the language of the fire sermon.

45. The fire sermon does not say that life is burning and death is extinction. It says passions are on fire.

46. The fire sermon does not say that the passions must be extinguished completely. It says do not add fuel to the flame.

47. Secondly, critics have failed to make a distinction between Nibbana and Parinibbana.

48. As the Udana says: "Parinibbana occurs when the body becomes disintegrated, all perceptions become stopped, all sensations die away, the activities cease and consciousness goes away. Thus Parinibbana means complete extinction."

49. Nibbana can never have this meaning. Nibbana means enough control over passion so as to enable one to walk on the path of righteousness. It was not intended to mean, anything more.

50. That Nibbana is another name for righteous life is made clear by the Buddha himself to Radha.

51. Once the venerable Radha came to the Exalted One. Having done so he saluted the Exalted One and sat down at one side. So seated the venerable Radha thus addressed the Exalted One: "Pray Lord, what for is Nibbana?"

52. "Nibbana means release from passion" replied the Lord.

53. "But Nibbana, Lord,—what is the aim of it?"

54. "Rooted in Nibbana, Radha, the righteous life is lived. Nibbana is its goal. Nibbana is its end."

55. That Nibbana does not mean extinction is also made clear by Sariputta in the following sermon:

56. "Once the Blessed Lord was staying at Shravasti in Anathpindika's Arama where Sariputta was also staying.

57. "The Lord, addressing the brethren, said: 'Almsmen, be ye partakers not of the world's goods but of my doctrine; in my compassion for you all I am anxious to ensure this.'





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58. "Thus spoke the Lord, who thereupon rose and passed to his own cell.

59. "Sariputta remained behind and the brethren asked him to explain what is Nibbana.

60. "Then Sariputta in reply to the brethren said : 'Brethren, know ye that greed is vile, and vile is resentment.

61. " ' To shed this greed and this resentment, there is the Middle Way which gives us eyes to see and makes us know, leading us on to peace, insight, enlightenment and Nibbana.

62. " ' What is this Middle Way ? It is naught but the Noble Eightfold Path of right outlook, right aims, right speech, right action, right means of livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration; this, almsmen is the Middle Way.

63. " ' Yes, sirs: anger is vile and malevolence is vile, envy and jealousy are vile, niggardliness and avarice are vile, hypocrisy and deceit and arrogance are vile, inflation is vile, and indolence is vile.

64. " ' For the shedding of inflation and indolence there is the Middle Way—giving us eyes to see, making us know, and leading us on to peace, insight, enlightenment.

65. " ' Nibbana which is naught but that Noble Eightfold Path.' "

66. Thus spoke the revered Sariputta—Glad at heart, the almsmen rejoiced at what he had said.

67. That the idea underlying Nibbana is that it is the path of righteousness. No one will mistake Nibbana for anything else.

68. Complete annihilation is one extreme and Parinibbana is another extreme. Nibbana is the Middle Way.

69. So understood all confusion about Nibbana will disappear.

§ 4. To Give up Craving is Dhamma

1. In the Dhammapada the Buddha says: "There is no greater benefit that, health and there is

nothing more valuable than the spirit of contentment.”

2. This spirit of contentment is not to be understood to mean meekness or surrender to circumstances.

3. Because that would be quite contrary to the other teachings of the Buddha.

4. The Buddha has not said, “Blessed are they who are poor.”

5. The Buddha has not said that the sufferer should not try to change his condition.

6. On the other hand, he has said that riches are welcome and instead of listless suffering he taught Virya which is energetic action.

7. What the Buddha meant when he said that contentment is the highest form of wealth is that man should not allow himself to be overpowered by greed which has no limits.

8. As the Bhikku Rathapala has said: “Rich men I see who, folly-led, never give, but still amass, athirst for pleasures new; the king whose conquests to the sea extend, for sway over empires overseas will pine, still craving, kings and subjects pass away; lacking, still lacking, they their bodies quit; never on earth can pleasures’ measure be filled.”

9. In the Maha-Nidan-Suttanta the Buddha has explained to Ananda the necessity of controlling greed. This is what he said.

10. “This it is, Ananda, that craving comes into being because of desire for gain, when desire for gain becomes a passion for possession when the spirit of possession gives rise to tenacity of possession it becomes avarice.

11. “Avarice or possession due to uncontrolled acquisitive instinct calls for watch and ward.

12. “Why is this craving or greed to be condemned? Because of this,” said the Buddha to Ananda, “many a bad and wicked state of things arises—blows and wounds, strife, contradiction and retorts ; quarrelling, slander and lies.”

13. That this is the correct analysis of class struggle there can be no doubt.





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14. That is why the Buddha insisted upon the control of greed and craving.

§ 5. *To believe that all compound things are impermanent is Dhamma*

1. This doctrine of impermanence has three aspects.
2. There is the impermanence of composite things.
3. There is the impermanence of the individual being.
4. There is the impermanence of the self nature of conditioned things.

5. The impermanence of composite things has been well explained by the great Buddhist philosopher Asanga.

6. "All things," says Asanga, "are produced by the combination of causes and conditions and have no independent noumenon of their own. When the combination is dissolved, their destruction ensures.

7. "The body of a living being consists of the combination of four great elements, viz., earth, water, fire and air, and when this combination is resolved into the four component elements, dissolution ensues.

8. "This is what is called the impermanence of a composite entity."

9. Impermanence of the living individual is best described by the formula—being is becoming.

10. In this sense a being of a past moment has lived, but does not live nor will he live. The being of a future moment will live but has not lived nor does he live ; the being of the present moment does live but has not lived and will not live.

11. In short, a human being is always changing, always growing. He is not the same at two different moments of his life.

12. The third phase of the doctrine of impermanence is somewhat difficult for a common man to follow.

13. To realize that every living being will die sometime or other is a very easy matter to understand.

14. But it is not quite so easy to understand how a human being can go on changing—becoming— while he is alive.

15. “How is this possible?” The Buddha’s answer was, “This is possible because all is impermanent.”

16. This later on gave rise to what is called Sunnya Vad.

17. The Buddhist Sunnyata does not mean nihilism out and out. It only means the perpetual changes occurring at every moment in the phenomenal world.

18. Very few realize that it is on account of Sunnyata that everything becomes possible ; without it nothing in the world would be possible. It is on the impermanence of the nature of all things that the possibility of all other things depends.

19. If things were not subject to continual change but were permanent and unchangeable, the evolution of all of life from one kind to the other and the development of living things would come to a dead stop.

20. If human beings died or changed but had continued always in the same state what would the result have been ? The progress of the human race would have come to a dead halt.

21. Immense difficulty would have arisen if Sunnya is regarded as being void or empty.

22. But this is not so. Sunnya is like a point which has substance but neither breadth nor length.

23. All things are impermanent was the doctrine preached by the Buddha.

24. What is the moral of this doctrine of the Buddha ? This is a much more important question.

25. The moral of this doctrine of impermanence is simple. Do not be attached to anything.

26. It is to cultivate detachment, detachment from property, from friends, etc., that he said “All these are impermanent.”





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§ 6. *To believe that Karma is the instrument of Moral Order is Dhamma*

1. There is an order in the physical world. This is proved by the following phenomenon.

2. There is a certain order in the movements and actions of the starry bodies.

3. There is a certain order by which seasons come and go in regular sequence.

4. There is a certain order by which seeds grow into trees and trees yield fruits and fruits give seeds.

5. In Buddhist terminology these are called Niyamas, laws which produce an orderly sequence such as Rutu Niyam, Bija Niyam.

6. Similarly is there a moral order in Human Society. How is it produced? How is it maintained?

7. Those who believe in the existence of God have no difficulty in answering the question. And their answer is easy.

8. Moral order, they say, is maintained by Divine Dispensation. God created the world and God is the Supreme Governor of the world. He is also the author of moral as well as of physical law.

9. Moral law, according to them, is for man's good because it ensues from Divine will. Man is bound to obey God who is his maker and it is obedience to God which maintains the moral order.

10. Such is the argument in support of the view that the moral order is maintained by Divine Dispensation.

11. The explanation is by no means satisfactory. For if the moral law has originated from God, and if God is the beginning and end of the moral order and if man cannot escape from obeying God, why is there so much moral disorder in the world?

12. What is the authority of the Divine Law? What is the hold of the Divine Law over the individual? These are pertinent questions. But to none of them is there any satisfactory answer from those who rely on Divine Dispensation as the basis for the moral order.

13. To overcome these difficulties the thesis has been somewhat modified.

14. It is said : no doubt creation took effect at the command of God. It is also true that the cosmos entered upon its life by his will and by his direction. It is also true that He imparted to the cosmos once for all the energy which served as the driving power of a stupendous mechanism.

15. But God leaves it to Nature to work itself out in obedience to the laws originally given by him.

16. So that if the moral order fails to work out as expected by God, the fault is of Nature and not of God.

17. Even this modification in the theory does not solve the difficulty. It only helps to exonerate God from his responsibility. For the question remains, why should God leave it to Nature to execute His laws ? What is the use of such an absentee God ?

18. The answer which the Buddha gave to the question,—“How is moral order maintained?” is totally different.

19. His answer was simple. “It is the Kamma Niyam and not God which maintains the moral order in the universe.” That was the Buddha’s answer to the question.

20. The moral order of the universe may be good or it may be bad. But according to the Buddha the moral order rests on man and on nobody else.

21. “Kamma means man’s action and Vipaka is its effect. If the moral order is bad it is because man does Akusala (Bad) Kamma. If the moral order is good it is because man does Kusala (Good) Kamma.

22. The Buddha was not content with merely speaking of Kamma. He spoke of the law of Kamma which is another name for Kamma Niyam.

23. By speaking of the law of Kamma what the Buddha wanted to convey was that the effect of the deed was bound to follow the deed, as surely as night follows day. It was like a Niyam or rule.

24. No one could fail to benefit by the good effects of a Kusala Kamma and no one could escape the evil effects of Akusala Kamma.



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25. Therefore, the Buddha's admonition was: Do Kusala Kamma so that humanity may benefit by a good moral order which a Kusala Kamma helps to sustain ; do not do Akusala Kamma for humanity will suffer from the bad moral order which an Akusala Kamma will bring about.

26. It may be that there is a time interval between the moment when the Kamma is done and the moment when the effect is felt. It is so, often enough.

27. From this point of view, Kamma is either (1) Ditthadamma Vedaniya Kamma (Immediately Effective Kamma) ; (2) Upapajjedaniya Kamma (Remotely Effective Kamma); and (3) Aporapariya Vedaniya Kamma (Indefinitely Effective Kamma).

28. Kamma may also fall into the category of Ahosi Kamma, i.e., Kamma which is non-effective. This Ahosi Kamma comprises all such Kammas which are too weak to operate, or which are counteracted by a more Kamma, at the time when it should have worked.

29. But making allowance for all these considerations, it does not in any sense derogate from the claim made by the Buddha that the law of Kamma is inexorable.

30. The theory of the law of Kamma does not necessarily involve the conception that the effect of the Kamma recoils on the doer of it and there is nothing more to be thought about it. This is an error. Sometimes the action of one affects another instead of the doer. All the same it is the working of the law of Kamma because it either upholds or upsets the moral order.

31. Individuals come and individuals go. But the moral order of the universe remains and so also the law of Kamma which sustains it.

32. It is for this reason that in the religion of the Buddha, Morality has been given the place of God.

33. Thus the Buddha's answer to the question—"How the moral order in the universe is sustained?" is so simple and so irrefutable.

34. And yet its true meaning is scarcely grasped.

Often, almost always, it is either misunderstood or misstated or misinterpreted. Not many seem to be conscious that the law of Kamma was propounded by the Buddha as an answer to the question— “How the moral order is maintained ?”



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35. That, however, is the purpose of Buddha’s Law of Kamma.

36. The Law of Kamma has to do only with the question of general moral order. It has nothing to do with the fortunes or misfortunes of an individual.

37. It is concerned with the maintenance of the moral order in the universe.

38. It is because of this that the law of Kamma is a part of Dhamma.

PART IV

What is Not—Dhamma

1. Belief in the Supernatural is Not—Dhamma.
2. Belief in Ishwara (God) is Not Essentially Part of Dhamma.
3. Dhamma Based on Union with Brahma is a False Dhamma.
4. Belief in Soul is Not—Dhamma.
5. Belief in Sacrifices is Not—Dhamma.
6. Belief Based on Speculation is Not—Dhamma.
7. Reading Books of Dhamma is Not—Dhamma.
8. Belief in the Infallibility of Books of Dhamma is Not— Dhamma.

§ 1. *Belief in the Supernatural is Not— Dhamma*



1. Whenever any phenomenon occurs, humanity is always wanting to know how it has happened, what is the cause of it.

2. Sometimes cause and the effect are so proximate and so close that it is not difficult to account for the occurrence of the event.

3. But often-times the effect is so far away from the cause for the effect is not accountable. Apparently there appears to be no cause for it.

4. Then the question arises: How has this event occurred?

5. The commonest answer is that the occurrence of the event is due to some supernatural cause which is often called a miracle.

6. The Buddha's predecessors gave very different answers to this question.

7. Pakauda Katyana denied that there was a cause for every event. Events, he said, occurred independently.

8. Makhali Ghosal admitted that an event must have a cause. But he preached that the cause is not to be found in human agency but is to be sought in nature, necessity, inherent laws of things, predestination or the like.

9. The Buddha repelled these doctrines. He maintained that not only every event has a cause but the cause is the result of some human action or natural law.

10. His contention against the doctrine of Time, Nature, Necessity, etc., being the cause of the occurrence of an event, was this.

11. If Time, Nature, Necessity, etc., be the sole cause of the occurrence of an event, then who are we?

12. Is man merely a puppet in the hands of Time, Nature, Chance, Gods, Fate, Necessity?

13. What is the use of man's existence if he is not free? What is the use of man's intelligence if he continues to believe in supernatural causes?



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14. If man is free, then every event must be the result of man's action or of an act of Nature. There cannot be any event which is supernatural in its origin.

15. It may be that man is not able to discover the real cause of the occurrence of an event. But if he has intelligence he is bound one day to discover it.

16. In repudiating supernaturalism the Buddha had three objects.

17. His first object was to lead man to the path of rationalism.

18. His second object was to free man to go in search of truth.

19. His third object was to remove the most potent source of superstition, the result of which is to kill the spirit of inquiry.

20. This is called the law of Kamma or Causation.

21. This doctrine of Kamma and Causation is the most central doctrine in Buddhism. It preaches Rationalism and Buddhism is nothing if not rationalism.

22. That is why worship of the supernatural is Not—Dhamma.

§ 2. *Belief in Ishwara (God) is Not Essentially Part of Dhamma*

1. Who created the world is a common question. That the world was created by God is also a very common answer.

2. In the Brahmanic scheme this God is called by a variety of names—Prajapati, Ishwar, Brahma or Maha Brahma.

3. To the question who this God is and how He came into being there is no answer.

4. Those who believe in God describe Him as a being who is *omnipotent*, i.e., all-powerful, *Omnipresent*, i.e., he fills the whole universe, and *Omniscient*, i.e., he knows everything.

5. There are also certain moral qualities which are attributed to God. God is said to be good, God is said to be just and God is said to be all-loving.

6. The question is did the Blessed Lord accept God as the creator of the universe.

7. The answer is, “No.” He did not.

8. There are various grounds why he rejected the doctrine of the Existence of God.

9. Nobody has seen God. People only speak of God.

10. God is unknown and unseen.

11. Nobody can prove that God has created the world. The world has evolved and is not created.

12. What advantage can there be in believing in God? It is unprofitable.

13. The Buddha said that a religion based on God is based on speculation.

14. A religion based on God is, therefore, not worth having.

15. It only ends in creating superstition.

16. The Buddha did not leave the question there. He discussed the question in its various aspects.

17. The grounds on which he rejected the doctrine were various.

18. He argued that the doctrine of the Existence of God is not based on truth.

19. This he made clear in his dialogue with the two Brahmins, Vasettha and Bhardvaja.

20. Now a dispute arose between them as to which was the true path of salvation and which false.

21. About the time the Blessed One was journeying through Kosala with a great company of the brethren he happened to halt at the Brahmin village called Manaskata and stayed in the mango grove on the bank of the river Akiravati.

22. Manaskata was the town in which Vasettha and Bhardvaja lived. Having heard that the Blessed Lord was staying in their town, they went to him and each one put forth his point of view.

23. Bhardvaja said: “The path of Tarukkha is the straight path, this is the direct way which makes





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for salvation, and leads him, who acts according to it, into a state of union with Brahma.”

24. Vasettha said : “Various Brahmins, O Gotama, teach various paths. The Addhariya Brahmins, the Tittiriya Brahmins, the Kanchoka Brahmins, the Bheehuvargiya Brahmins. They all lead those who act according to them, into a state of union with Brahma.

25. “Just as near a village or a town there are many and various paths yet they all meet together in the village—just in the same way all the various paths taught by the various Brahmins lead to union with Brahma.”

26. “Do you say that they all lead aright, Vasettha?” asked the Buddha. “I say so, Gautama,” replied Vasettha.

27. “But Vasettha, is there a single one of the Brahmins versed in the three Vedas who has ever seen Brahma face to face.”

28. “No, indeed, Gautama.”

29. “Is there a single one of the teachers of the Brahmanas versed in the three Vedas who has seen Brahma face to face?”

30. “No, indeed, Gautama.”

31. “Nobody has seen Brahma. There is no perceptual knowledge about Brahma.” “So it is,” said Vasettha. “How then can you believe that the assertion of the Brahmins that Brahma exists is based on truth?”

32. “Just, Vasettha, as when a string of blind men are clinging one to the other, neither can the foremost see nor can the middle one see nor can the hindmost see—just even so, methinks, Vasettha, is the talk of the Brahmins nothing but blind talk. The first sees not, the middle one sees not, nor can the latest one. The talk of these Brahmins turns out to be ridiculous, mere words, a vain and empty thing.

33. “Is this not a case, Vasettha, of a man falling in love with a woman whom he has not seen?” “Yes, it is,” replied Vasettha.

34. “Now what think you Vasettha? If people

should ask you, 'Well! Good friend ! This most beautiful woman in the land, whom you thus love and long for, who is she? Is she a noble lady, or a Brahmin woman, or of the trader class, or a Sudra ?'



35. "With regard to the origin of Maha Brahma, the so-called creator," the Blessed Lord said, addressing Bhardvaja and Vasettha, "Friends, that being who was first born thinks thus : I am Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Vanquisher, the Unvanquished, the All-seeing, the Disposer, the Lord, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Assignor, the Master of Myself, the father of all that are and are to be. By me are these beings created.

36. "This means that Brahma is the father of those that are and are to be.

37. "You say that the worshipful Brahma, the Vanquisher, the Unvanquished, Father of all that are and are to be, he by whom we were created, he is permanent, constant, eternal, unchanging, and he will remain so for ever and ever. Then why are we who are created by that Brahma, have come hither, all impermanent, transient, unstable, short-lived, destined to pass away ?"

38. To this Vasettha had no answer.

39. His third argument had reference to the Omnipotence of God. "If God is Omnipotent and is also the efficient cause of creation, then because of this man cannot have any desire to do anything, nor can there be any necessity to do anything, nor can he have the will to do anything or to put forth any effort. Man must remain a passive creature with no part to play in the affairs of the world. If this is so, why did Brahma create man at all ?"

40. To this also Vasettha had no answer.

41. His fourth argument was that if God is good then why do men become murderers, thieves, unchaste, liars, slanderers, abusive babblers, covetous, malicious and perverse ? The cause of this must be Ishwara. Is this possible with the existence of God who is good ?



42. His fifth argument was related to God being Omniscient, just and merciful.

43. "If there is a supreme creator who is just and merciful, why then does so much injustice prevail in the world?" asked the Blessed Lord. "He who has eyes can see the sickening sight ; why does not Brahma set his creatures right ? If his power is so wide that no limits can restrain, why is his hand so rarely spread to bless ? Why are his creatures all condemned to suffering ? Why does he not give happiness to all ? "Why do fraud, lies and ignorance prevail? Why does falsehood triumph over truth ? Why does truth and justice fail ? I count your Brahma as one of the most unjust, who made a world only to shelter wrong.

44. "If there exists some Lord all-powerful to fulfil in every creature, bliss or woe, and action, good or ill, then that Lord is stained with sin. Either man does not work his will or God is not just and good or God is blind."

45. His next argument against the doctrine of God was that the discussion of this question about the existence of God was unprofitable.

46. According to him the centre of religion lay not in the relation of man to God. It lay in the relation between man and man. The purpose of religion is to teach man how he should behave towards other men so that all may be happy.

47. There was also another reason why the Blessed Lord was against belief in the existence of God.

48. He was against religious rites, ceremonies, and observances. He was against them because they were the home of superstition and superstition was the enemy of *Samma Ditthi*, the most important element in his Ashtangmarg.

49. To the Blessed Lord belief in God was the most dangerous thing. For belief in God gave rise to belief in the efficacy of worship and prayer and the efficacy of worship and prayer gave rise to the office of the priest and the priest was the evil genius who