

The Joy of
Enlightenment

Tarajyoti Govinda

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*This book is dedicated to
Ananda Tara Shan
for her love and dedication
to the Lord Maitreya
and the spiritual Cause*

And the Lord Buddha smiled as He looked down upon the little girl who had touched the hem of His robe with such reverence. He looked deep into her eyes and saw incarnation after incarnation in work for the Hierarchy into which he had just initiated her. He knew of many deaths she would suffer to spread the Wisdom and the Light in each country she would embody in, until three souls for whom He had the highest regard would come together in a future life to bring his wisdom to the West under the name of Theosophy.*

** His wife Yasodhara as H.P. Blavatsky, His son Rahula as H.S. Olcott, and the little girl as Annie Besant.*

Ananda Tara Shan (1993, p. 52)



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FOREWORD

I was brought up in a western society where Christian religion dominated and though I always wanted to know more about other religions and ways of coming closer to God, this curiosity was frowned upon. Since, I have explored other religions and philosophies and have experienced joy and delight with what I have discovered. My discovery is that any true religion, be it Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism or Native tradition, has heart behind it and has love as its essence; a universal love that is inclusive and not separatist.

In my search to discover more about what is behind true religions I found Maitreya Theosophy, which brings forth the Divine and Ancient Wisdom through the Heart of Maitreya Christ Buddha, Who is the Unifier and Lord of Love. Theosophy is the Ancient Wisdom; the study of Spirit and the Path we walk in our spiritual evolution; the path to enlightenment. Maitreya shines the Light of Love for all to see and calls forth all who are pure of heart, no matter what religion or faith, no matter what creed or race. He asks humanity to create a Universal Sister- and Brotherhood, where all are united in His Heart.

Lord Gautama in His incarnation as Gautama Buddha prophesied Maitreya's coming. He called Him the Great Compassionate One. Gautama Buddha was Himself an emissary of the wisdom through loving kindness and compassion. He brought forth the teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, giving a guide as to how we can choose to live if we seek to walk the spiritual path and move towards enlightenment. His teaching is practical and enlightening in its simplicity. His life was a living example of his teachings. In this book I have endeavoured to convey the essence of Gautama

Buddha's life (a manifestation of compassion) and teachings (the way of compassion). In coming to know the principles that He taught we also come into contact with the principles of Right Human Relations (the Christed Principles), which provide the steps needed to walk the Christed Path. It is here that we see the merging of Christ and Buddha in action.

As you read about the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha I urge you to read with an open heart and mind and see what you find.

THE ESSENCE

DHARAMSALA, INDIA

June 1983

The air was crisp, the mountains seemed to pulsate as their huge presence marked dimensions of space and time eternal. As I walked along the path, a winding road, for travellers on foot and not automobiles, a sense of ancestors, of humanity's footsteps through the aeons of time was evident. Every twenty minutes or so, I passed a Buddhist monk wrapped in orange cloth with shaven head or an old Indian woman carting goods for the daily tasks of cooking, or livestock being gathered. After some time walking, I came across a chai shop where tea was served and people sat, engaged in small talk about the beauty of the day. The sun shone, the birds chirped, the dew and frost glistened on the ground as the golden rays of sun permeated the Earth's crust. Children appeared on their way to school, their smiling bright faces sending the joy of all into the moment. Each step I walked on this path was sure and eternal and the depth of the horizon echoed this eternity. The mountains appeared to roll on forever and contrasted with the haze of the light blue sky. The light in India was unique. It was as though every atom of everything in existence was full and separate, yet one with all.

I had been here for some weeks now and had enjoyed the simplicity of day-to-day life. I met some Canadian girls who were teaching yoga and I took part each day for an hour and a half. This particular morning, I was on my way looking for the huge library I had heard about. It was somewhere on this path yet every time I tried to find it, I found instead the library of the Earth, of the people. It seemed the learning I needed at this point was not to be found in books but in the vibration of life itself. I found my way to the top of the hill to a small village called Mcloud Ganj and passed many little Tibetan restaurants, shops and homes that lined the narrow street. I passed the dairy where many were gathered to collect the day's milk. The fertility and the fullness of the milk said something about the richness of the life. As I approached the town I found, to my surprise, that many people were gathered

in “lotus position” with their hands in prayer. These people were mainly Tibetan and Indian. The Tibetan prayer wheels glistened in the sun as the sound of ‘OM’ permeated the gathering. I knew nothing of Buddhism in an intellectual sense, but I felt every ounce of the peace that was radiating that day and all the days during my stay in Dharamsala. I delighted in the stillness of simply “being” throughout my stay in this paradise. It was foreign to me yet it was home. It was kin. Something in my spirit was responding. Many were gathered as the Dalai Lama was present. I knew nothing of who he was or what that meant but it did not matter. The earth hummed and the rivers sang with the glory and richness of life, every moment mattered, every moment was. I practised my yoga, I ate my meals, I read in the afternoons in the sun. I eventually found the library and a book by Hermann Hesse, “Siddharta.” It was the only book that attracted me. I entered the halls of learning and in my dreams at night I flew to the Wesak Valley laden with flowers in the sunshine. I had found home.

I sat on the mountain top overlooking the valleys, part of me was experiencing a death, a death of old values and attitudes and perceptions of the world. I could see life in everything now, even the ground beneath my feet, and so I could not continue in the old way. The light of Buddha had touched me and my consciousness lifted to a point where I could no longer be what I once was. I had been still for some time. The sunlight seemed to caress my skin with its rays of golden light and the sun warmed me, warmed every part. I could see the mountains in the distance forming an eternal horizon. There seemed no limit to the expansion that was taking place. I gathered my shopping which consisted of a few vegetables for the evening dinner and began my way down the mountain track to the small abode in which I was living. I had to pass through the town once again - pass by the Tibetan women whose full and beautiful faces radiated a gentleness and strength that was new for me. They had an energy and a light which I was just beginning to discover. The essence of God was in the structure of their faces and in the light in their eyes. In my upbringing I had always seen God, or at least imagined him to be, male in energy and aspect. The discovery of this strength and purity in the being of these women was the beginning of my understanding of the feminine aspect of God which comes to Earth through the form. They radiated a light of wisdom and understanding which had compassion embedded within it, and though I was alone I was in essence part of something much bigger, part of humanity, part of the Earth and I could feel new understanding of the concept of Mother making changes to my consciousness and perceptions of the world. When I looked for God in the past I looked toward the male part of life, to the action, to the doing. The shifts taking place within the core of my being made me look now to the feminine aspect, to the stillness of being. The words came to me as I walked, “This is My Light that I give you - shine it in remembrance of Me that others may see and be illumined also.” I could feel the Christ in the words - in my heart. I could feel the Christ in the Buddha. I stopped for a moment to take in the expansiveness of the entire scene. The sunlight beat down strongly on the land and the

hue of light in the sky made an orange and violet light that touched the sky across the whole horizon. Tomorrow would be warm. I smiled, as life itself was every day becoming warmer.

LOVING KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

Compassion can be roughly defined in terms of a state of mind that is non-violent, non-harming and non-aggressive. It is a mental attitude based on the wish for others to be free of their suffering and is associated with a sense of commitment, responsibility and respect towards the other.

The more fully one understands suffering, and the various kinds of suffering we are subject to, the deeper will be one's level of compassion.

In the case of compassion... (one has)... a very high level of alertness and determination because you are voluntarily and deliberately accepting another's suffering for a higher purpose. There is a feeling of connectedness and commitment, a willingness to reach out to others, a feeling of freshness rather than dullness.

The Dalai Lama (1999, pp. 114-117)

When one has compassion for another one also has benevolence. When compassion is translated into action it becomes loving kindness. Loving kindness and compassion are like twin brothers. When our hearts begin to fill with compassion we are unaware of what sweet miracles may come. Life changes. Motives change. Our senses are touched and a softening occurs. Sometimes tears flow. There is no pity. No condescension. There is a consciousness that embraces all with love. Loving kindness and compassion are at the heart of Buddha's teaching. To study His teaching without these essential ingredients is like studying a river by studying the river bed, without the river flowing through it. Buddha taught by example that to be a holy person we must live the teachings. Similarly we must bring the spirit of loving kindness and compassion into our lives. In this way we awaken the joy of service within us and the relationships we have with others and ourselves can grow to new and warmer dimensions.

JOY AND FREEDOM

*There is no fire like greed,
No crime like hatred,
No sorrow like separation,
No sickness like hunger of heart,
and no joy like the joy of
freedom.*

*Health, contentment and trust
Are your greatest possessions,
And freedom your greatest joy.*

*Look within.
Be still.
Free from fear and attachment,
Know the sweet joy of living the way.*

Buddha (adapted from the Dhammapada
translated by Thomas Byron)

Very often I meet people who are suffering and who blame others for their suffering. What people do not realise is that their very act of blaming others adds to that suffering. Why is it that we so often blame others for our suffering? If we didn't blame others we would have to acknowledge that our suffering exists. Understanding our suffering is the key to finding joy in life. Joy and sorrow are two sides of the same coin. We can't know one without the other. When we deny our suffering we create more suffering. It is only by accepting and embracing our suffering, by looking more deeply into it and the causes of it that we can find peace. When people dare to stop and look into the causes of their suffering they begin to approach the path of enlightenment, which eventually leads to freedom and liberation of soul. Many are afraid to stop and look because it means experiencing the pain they are trying to avoid. But the experience of that pain is the doorway to the joy of enlightenment.

In Australia, as in many cultures, we have become too busy to stop, too busy to look more deeply, so many illnesses are on the increase. Even when we ask another "How are you?" rarely do we stop to actually come to know. We often will not acknowledge how we really are to ourselves so how can we to

each other? We do not allow ourselves the space or time needed for our healing. Spirit comes to us in the spaces, yet we deny its entry. So often our thoughts race off to our future or are stuck in our past. What happens to the moment, the present now?

Recently I found myself quite ill. It was a message to stop with capital letters.” “STOP!” my body was saying. Many around me told me to rest. The word “rest” seemed so foreign, yet rest was what I needed in order to heal. To simply stop and rest was a complex achievement. I had to stop all my self talk which was geared to keeping me active and take a breath. In that process I found I had many habit thoughts which resulted in habit actions and even habit feelings. The loudest aspect of these habit thoughts were thoughts of worry which were also, it seemed, the ones responsible for the stress response. I did stop however. My body gave me no choice. In the stopping and resting a new awareness began to emerge. An awareness that was mindful and observant. An aware mind which enabled me to observe my mind. I began to see how I was creating my own stress and my own suffering with my mind. I also came to recognise that I also had the power to change this pattern. The key was to stop, rest and allow new awareness to emerge.

When viewing my life through the eyes of this new awareness many insights flooded forth which were the seeds I needed to begin the path towards enlightenment. These seeds were the matter I needed for contemplation. Contemplation revealed the reflection of the way I had been living with all its flaws. It also revealed the possibility for change and a new perspective, one which was imbued with the joy of enlightenment. As I looked deeply I found purpose and meaning. This in itself gave joy. Suddenly life was full of joy and gratitude for its beauty. I was happy to get up and move into the flow of the day. I became active again but in a mindful way, no longer blinded by the glamour of my own “busyness.” I felt a strengthening of direction and purpose at very deep levels. I was able to face myself in places where before I was blind, and make the needed breakthroughs. It is not that I did not know these things or had never come to these realisations before. I did, however, need a reminder. The realisations deepened.

In my state of vulnerable health I had to be careful of what foods I ingested. I had to watch out for artificial flavouring or colouring. Foods had to be natural. This led me to consider what else I ingest on other levels of existence. For example, where my attitudes or values had become artificially “flavoured” or “coloured.” I began to look more deeply at where I had moved out of alignment with the simple breath of life, and so moved out of alignment with truth and love. Where and how had I ingested wrong attitudes that acted as poison to my mind and heart? How could I manifest in health instead of illness? The answer was simple. It lay in the remembrance of loving kindness and compassion, for

others and also for the self. This was the key to balance. This is what lies behind true service. When one gives wholehearted service motivated by loving kindness and compassion, there is joy and there is freedom.

Slow deliberation always reveals the true and the beneficial. I often think of the analogy of the person on a horse charging through the forest compared with the person who walks alongside the horse and notices the beauty and detail of the forest as he or she moves. Both hold the reins of the horse but only one is still in charge, and only one is able to act with awareness. If there is anyone who can tell us how we can walk the spiritual path with awareness it is the Buddha. Both from His Life and His Teachings this is evident. In the chapters that follow we will explore the gifts that the Lord Buddha gave us through his incarnation as Gautama Buddha. Contemplate what is written and allow the true and the beneficial to be revealed.

A MANIFESTATION OF COMPASSION

GAUTAMA BUDDHA

Lord Gautama Buddha, during His life on Earth as Gautama Buddha, brought forth the needed Wisdom to humanity. Gautama Buddha made Buddhism into a practical way of life and gave the teachings He discovered to a thirsting humanity with heart and compassion. His life was a manifestation of compassion. He put theory into practice through His life's example and encouraged others to do the same. As the story of His life unfolds, a story derived from the myth and legend of the life of this great soul when he walked the Earth as Siddhartha Gautama, you will learn of the great magnetism felt by others when around Him. It was strong because He possessed and radiated the qualities of simple truth, wisdom, and compassion. Gautama was very practical. He did not want to immerse himself in a fog of abstraction, he wanted to find out why people suffer and how they could be delivered from suffering. He was after truths that could be used in the world of action. He was never an extremist in practical issues. He was an expansive and flexible man in that regard. He was profound, humorous and assertive, a demanding but considerate teacher, a formidable logician and debater and a mystic from whom wisdom radiated.

Buddha's ideas emerged from His time spent alone in contemplation and His interactions with people. He knew how to reach people and have them stand still and listen. His disciples called Him the Blessed, or Enlightened One and addressed him as Lord. He referred to Himself as the Truthfinder. He addressed others as monks and called himself a simple monk. He believed that He was rediscovering

truths that had been forgotten (Kelen, 1969). He had a charm of manner, a tactfulness, common sense and a lack of bigotry. Buddha saw that the reason for the human plight is our own ignorance which we must conquer. He saw Nirvana as being wherever the dharma is being obeyed. The dialogues that have survived for us to ponder are alive with the joy of argument. Buddha did not enter into futile bickering or pointless argument and when people of other sects decided they would like to become a Buddhist he would in many cases urge them to reconsider. He admired the ideal Brahmin way of life and was opposed to the caste system. He wished everybody to be considered high caste. He did not like the customs of the Hindu which required the infliction of pain on animals as sacrifices but did condone charity for the welfare of others. Buddha believed in the Law of Karma and that our fate is decided by our own thoughts and actions. He believed that moral people have only to do good and let the Law of Karma work for them. He placed a lot of emphasis on the necessity for individual effort: "I do but point the way, it is for you to sweat and strain." He believed you had to know for yourself, "this is right and this is wrong" (Kelen, 1969) - it had to come from the heart. He liked people to think for themselves.

Buddha taught His monks to live in harmlessness and to take refuge in the teachings. Therefore they did not defend themselves when met by others' aggression. They were to be kind of heart, to become pure in deed and speech, thought and mode of living, to become guarded as to the senses, to eat moderately, to become mindful and circumspect and to possess the superior wisdom.

His doctrine is that of the not-self. He makes it clear that we are not our body, our emotions or our thoughts or perceptions and that things are in a state of impermanence. In turning away from these things of impermanence we are able to lose desire and become liberated; that is, become detached and not attached. He was aware of the power of free will and choice in our thought, feeling and actions. We can *choose* to cultivate love, to forgive instead of harbour ill-feeling and grievances and to give instead of take.

Buddha believed that attainment of profound knowledge comes by gradual training and gradual doing of what is to be done. He filled His discourses with parables which were picturesque and always to the point. He was witty and delighted in paradoxes and parables. He had infinite patience and consideration for His pupils. His tone was assertive and persuasive. His words would be reflected upon by His monks in thoughtful meditation. What the Buddha said was faithfully learned by heart by those who listened, in order that they might impress the Buddha's teachings accurately upon others.

Buddha taught that the soul has the goal of harmony, liberation, nirvana. His teachings became known as the wheel of dharma. His teachings in themselves were compelling, but when we add to it the

welcoming, friendly, polite, plain speaking Lord Gautama we begin to see how His magnanimity was comparable only to that of Jesus who could make people drop the tools of their trade to follow Him. He gathered people wherever He went.

Gautama's love for humanity and His awareness of a call beyond Himself becomes evident as His tale unfolds. The stories of Gautama's birth were not recorded but passed on by word of mouth for two centuries and they grew and changed; the miracles and parts people liked to hear became more elaborate and a lot of the drier facts dropped out (Kelen, 1969). Like many myths and legends the content may vary from one version to another and the truth is not always clear. Yet the essence of Gautama, His loving kindness and compassion, His love, wisdom and insight, comes through in many of the stories told. I have drawn the story together from several texts of good repute (see references) to make a coherent whole. Where I have relied on such texts, references are made. As we come to the latter half of His life the liberation and joy of enlightenment becomes evident.

BUDDHA'S BIRTH

The Lord Buddha was born as the son of the King of the Sakyas. His father's name was Suddhodana Gautama. They were Hindus and were descendants of the Aryans who moved into northern India about 3000 BC. The Aryans spoke Sanskrit and compiled the Vedas. These people were aware that though the wise call God by many names, there exists only One, and the many Gods are but aspects of the One. The Sakyas were a simple farming folk who made sacrifices in Hindu tradition of gold and grain and animals to the Gods (Kelen, 1969). Suddhodana was married to Maya, the queen who was extraordinarily beautiful, intelligent and pious.

At the full moon festival in midsummer the people of Kapillivaistu swarmed the streets to celebrate. The women wore brightly coloured clothing and "the ankle bells, dancing girls, skirts unfurled in colour and spangles, bangles, adding to the colour and fervour of the occasion" (Kelen, 1969). The sacred cows also added to the flavour of the festival. Queen Maya dreamed of the birth of her new son. It was a unique dream which told the holy men a great event was to occur. Queen Maya was filled with happiness, vitality and joy and she told the dream to her husband, Suddhodana. He summoned his Brahmins, the wise men of his court. The wise men told the king and queen that a son would be born to them, a son who could become king and rule the world. Or who, if he should choose to leave his house and forsake his royal power, would go forth amongst humanity out of compassion, and become a Buddha, the wisest of men. Suddhodana was very pleased; not just a son but an intelligent son who could help him solve the problems of his reign. It was the custom in that time for women to give birth

under their parental roof so when the time approached Maya set off to travel to Devadaha. By the time Maya, her servants and ladies in waiting had travelled to the ridge of her native land she came across a lovely dell known as Lambini grove full of giant trees and shrubs. The grove was a mass of flowers from which came the hum of bees, songs of birds and the cries of peacocks. She chose to stop and rest here and while reaching up her hand to touch the branch of the satin wood tree, she gave birth to a beautiful boy of creamy gold complexion. Some Buddhist texts say that a great lotus flower sprang up from the earth.

On return to Kapilavastu, King Suddhodana gave his son the name Siddhartha Gautama meaning “the victorious one.” The Brahmins could see the thirty-two signs that mark a man of noble destiny. His birth took place on the full moon of May, causing a brilliant light to spread over the Earth. An infinite and splendid radiance penetrated all.

In many stories it was said that a holy man called Asita came down from the Himalayas in the first few days after his birth. He travelled a great distance because of the wonderful signs he had seen in meditation. He knew that Siddhartha Gautama would gain spiritual knowledge for the benefit of all people. Asita wept when he saw Siddhartha. He cried, not because he saw something bad for the prince but because he actually did have all the special signs that speak of a glorious future. He prophesied that Siddhartha, should he choose to become the great teacher instead of the great king, would see the sadness in the world, leave the palace, discover a way to end all suffering and then teach this way to whoever would listen. Asita was crying because he himself had spent his life looking for the truth and searching for a way to end all suffering. His pain was simply that he would not be able to learn from Siddhartha in this life. King Suddhodana was happy that there was no danger to the prince’s life and he hoped that he would first be king, and if he chose, later, a holy man.

GROWING UP - SIDDHARTHA

Queen Maya died when Siddhartha was seven days old and Siddhartha was brought up by his aunt, Prajapati. Prajapati became Suddhodana’s second wife and she loved Siddhartha as if he were her own (Kelen, 1969). King Suddhodana doted on Siddhartha. Suddhodana himself was said to be industrious, conscious and just, a ruler who lived within the law and obeyed the law. He trained Siddhartha to be a competent man of affairs like himself. Siddhartha sat in the judgement hall. In the judgement hall there was an endless procession of worldly and selfish argument about which Siddhartha learned to pronounce law judgements to his father’s and onlookers’ delight. They called him a seer. When

Siddhartha was eight he could read and write all the alphabets in India as well as that of the Chinese and the Mongols.

Devadatta and Ananda were his cousins. With them he practiced knightly skills such as horsemanship and archery, chariot racing and wrestling, jousting and lance throwing. Yet he had no heart for winning or wrestling. He detested hunting and he eventually gave up athletic sports. He did not like to inflict the pain of losing upon his opponent and would rather purposely miss the mark.

One day when his cousins were hunting, a flight of swans streamed across the sky and Devadatta sent forth an arrow which caught the lead swan on the wing. Siddhartha heard the swan fall and came forward to help it. When Devadatta came to claim his bird Siddhartha would not give it to him. His argument was that it should be in the hands of one who would look after it and not one who would harm it and he felt they should go to a holy man to decide who was right. A holy man appeared and declared the swan should be looked after by Siddhartha (Landaw and Brooke, 1992). Devadatta was eaten by resentment relating to the swan issue and in the future he was to become Gautama's enemy. His cousin Ananda became his closest friend. It is said that it was Ananda who first told the tales of Gautama's youth in the later years of the life when Gautama had passed on.

King Suddhodana was wary about his son's gentle habits. Prince Siddhartha was behaving more like a Brahmin and he was disinterested in the business of ruling a country. He even began to be bored with the fun of being a prince. The episode that follows bothered the king even more. It was Gautama's youthful step from the world of action to the world of Spirit. It was during the festival of the spring ploughing when the ground was broken and made level to receive the new seed, a day of rejoicing fully upon the promise of new life. The prince sat under the shade of the rose apple tree and he began to reflect upon life and contemplate the tragedy and suffering of life. Siddhartha valued life. That meant valuing the life of ants, grasshoppers, birds. His compassion at this stage was in the form of pity but the depth of his nature made him sit and contemplate the way out of suffering. It is said that the rose apple tree shaded him well after the turning shadows shifted. King Suddhodana was not happy when he heard of this and he consulted with his counsellors who suggested the prince's melancholia was due to his need for marriage (Landaw and Brooke, 1992).

“O king, your son sits and dreams of other worlds only because he is not yet attached to anything in this world. Find him a wife, let him get married and have children and soon he will stop dreaming and become interested in learning how to rule the kingdom”

(Kelen, 1969).

The king wasted no time in informing the Sakya nobles to bring young maidens, their daughters, to the palace. The day of meetings was arranged. Siddhartha was to receive them one by one. He had beside him a tray of lapis-lazuli, gold and silver given to him by the king to give to the girls he most admired. Counsellors were in the room noting anything that might indicate that his interest had been captured, but Siddhartha was courteous to every girl and handed jewels to each of them. When all the jewels were gone and all the girls had been introduced the prince rose to depart. Yasodhara entered. She approached Siddhartha, the tray was empty but he took off his own ring and gave it to her and then all of his jewels and his necklace he gave to Yasodhara (Landaw and Brooke, 1992).

He met Yasodhara when he was 16 years old and they fell in love. Yasodhara was the daughter of King Suppabuddha who reigned over the Koliya race. She was the same age as Prince Siddhartha. Years later Gautama explained to His disciples the reason for their swift delight in each other, that Yasodhara had been his wife in countless life times past. The Sakya nobles, Yasodhara's father and King Suddhodana did not like the way that Siddhartha had made his choice. They had not seen Siddhartha take up a bow or sit at his fathers side in the judgement hall for a long time. Siddhartha asked his father, "why are you so sad at heart?" Suddhodana told him that Yasodhara's father had refused to give her hand in marriage unless Siddhartha could win her in athletics and intellectual contests against all other suitors. Siddhartha agreed to the contest. Siddhartha won them all and regained his good reputation and Yasodhara became his bride.

Suddhodana was still worried about Siddhartha's sense of compassion. His fear was that Siddhartha would one day leave. He devised a plan to keep him, or so he thought. He went to great trouble to build great palaces to keep Siddhartha occupied. The palaces had the capacity to meet any desire the prince might have - music, food, entertainment - anything. Suddhodana also made a rule that there were to be no old people and no sick or dying people within the palaces, in case this stimulated the young prince's compassion. Eventually the prince tired of the palaces and Suddodhana decided to build another. The land he had set aside for it meant that Siddhartha would need to go through the town. The first time Siddhartha did so he noticed an old man in the crowd and learned about the existence of old age. Siddhartha tried twice more to reach the pleasure palace. The second time he came across a diseased man and learned there was disease and on the third attempt he came across a funeral procession carrying a dead man. He discovered that there was death.

Siddhartha tried yet a fourth time to set out for the garden of happiness, leaving the city through still another gate, but the Gods had not yet done with him and one of them appeared to him in the form of a bald-headed man in a rough robe. The man had peace with him. When he inquired "who is that?" it

was explained, “he is a monk who has gone forth from his home to lead a simple religious life, to find peace of mind through good actions, harmlessness and kindness to all creatures” (Landaw and Brooke, 1992).

Siddhartha had seen the truth of mortal life, old age, sickness and death, neglect, poverty, suffering and grief, yet he also glimpsed a man who seemed to have found a way of salvation. Siddhartha could stay in the palace no more. The solution was clear. He must renounce his possessions, leave his home, go forth into the world penniless and seek the divine secret he had sensed in the presence of the monk. Then he would find a way of teaching it to others.

Siddhartha realised the degree of deception that had surrounded his life. He went to inform his father of his decision to leave. “Hinder me no more and be not sorrowful for the hour of my departure has come.” The king begged him to stay. Siddhartha told him he would if the king would grant him a favour - that old age shall never come to him, nor illness, nor death and that Yasodhara and others he loved shall remain the same always. Suddhodana could not grant these wishes and Siddhartha told him he would leave before the full moon. Suddhodana placed men around the palace to prevent this and Prajapati, his foster mother, alerted all within the palace. His every movement was watched. This guarding by his foster mother and father was not what held him there. What held him was his love for his wife, Yasodhara.

Yasodhara was going to give birth by the time of the full moon. She was extremely happy and in her 29th year. Siddhartha could not bear the thought of leaving her. Yasodhara bore him a son, Rahula. He was frightened to lay eyes on his son because he thought he would never summon the strength to keep his resolve, so he planned his escape from the palace. At the time when the plan was put into action he could not pass Rahula and Yasodhara’s door without looking in. He found them asleep, and though he strained to see the child, he could not, as Yasodhara’s hand was resting on its head. He felt if he woke her he would not be able to leave. Some say he left without even bidding farewell to his charming and faithful wife. Others say they discussed it and she begged him not to go. He and Channa, a close servant, left through the gate of salvation and the guards who stood guard there fell into a deep sleep. The gates swung open silently and Siddhartha passed outside.

Mara, the evil one, the tempter, the lord of luxury, passions and lust had been ruling the life of the prince using Suddhodana as his tool. Now he stood across the path of Siddhartha and tempted him with the vision of the great king but Siddhartha had not been held back by his love for Yasodhara and Rahula, so there was little that the evil one could do to hold him. The evil one threatened that he would watch for any failing, any thought of lust or malice or cruelty and he would be there (Kelen, 1969).

Siddhartha Gautama was motivated by compassion. He broke the fetters of a worldly life and left home determined to think through the enigma of human suffering that he might point a way out of it.

When Siddhartha had travelled forty-nine miles he stopped at the bank of the river Anoma. He cut his hair and beard, handed his jewellery to Channa and told him to take them and the horse back to Kapilvastu. He traded clothes with a man in the forest wearing buff leather robes. He was no longer Prince Siddhartha but Gautama a yellow clad monk.

GAUTAMA BUDDHA

As he passed through Magadharhe, he came across a herdsman herding sheep. One of the ewes was having a hard time because she had two lambs, one that was wounded in the leg and kept lagging behind and another who kept bounding forward. The lame one was crying unceasingly as the herdsman urged her on. Gautama picked her up and slung her across his neck, pacing alongside the ewe. He asked the herdsman where he was going. The man replied that he was taking the sheep to the court of King Bumbasara where they would be killed as a sacrifice to the Gods. Gautama went with him to the great hall of sacrifice where the king stood with his Brahmins beside a sacrificial stone which streamed with the blood of the victims. The king's sins were being transferred by magical means to the animals which then died for them. Gautama roughly clothed as he was, used his royal voice and gesture. The crowd listened. He spoke of tenderness, of the miracle of life which none can give though it may so easily be taken away. He told the king that if he would sacrifice to the Gods his sinful desires instead of helpless lambs it would make a better man of him. The Brahmins looked ashamed and the king gave orders that the sacrifice should cease (Kelen, 1969).

Gautama left the hall of sacrifice and began to beg his food from door to door. Though people gave him food he found that when he sat down to eat he found difficulty in doing so. He found the food detestable compared with what he was used to but he knew it would help him towards his goal so he ate. He discovered caves in the hills of the Vindhya mountains where many having left their homes lived as holy men. He was in the kingdom of Madadha which is now known as Bihar. He came to the mountains in search of a spiritual teacher. He sought teaching first from Ulara Kalama. Gautama came to repeat the teachings by heart very quickly and understood them as well as Ulara himself. From Ulara he learned that he had the energy of mindfulness and concentration and that these qualities lead to the realm of non-existence. Gautama wanted more than the realm of non-existence and took his leave and came upon another teacher called Udraka. He felt a sense of futility once he had grasped the teaching when he found out that it led to a state of neither perception or non- perception. Such a state of mind

is perhaps a high state for a mystic but it did not contain the cure for human suffering. Gautama took his leave and five of Udraka's followers chose instead to follow Gautama, hoping that one day Gautama would have his own doctrine to share with them (Kelen, 1969; Landaw and Brooke, 1992).

His life amongst the ascetics taught him much. He was acutely aware that the monks had taken flight away from the people and were speculating their philosophies in abstraction. On the other hand there was the popular religion with empty ritual worship of Gods, some of which was barbaric. Some yogis practiced queerly harmonious positions, others believed that by undergoing extremities of self-torture they could crush the passions of the body and achieve complete control of their mind. Some stared unceasingly at the sun, some held an arm in the air for years until it withered, or lived on manure or sat on spikes. Gautama and his companions listened to what people had to say of their methods. He then went to Uruvela.

He spent years trying out these exercises in the hope of making himself free of passion and to rekindle the fire of supreme knowledge. He sat and did this with his five companions. As the years passed, although his mind was not confused his body was painfully disturbed. His clothes rotted, birds sat on his head as he sat in a motionless trance, his hair matted, fears plagued him and he meditated until he had overcome the fear and the terror. He lived on berries and weeds and sometimes the townsmen would bring him food. He tried starving himself and became extremely thin.

One day he reached the point where he was starving to death. He recalled the day of his adolescent years where he sat under a rose apple tree and sank into a trance and he asked himself could such happiness which does not come from desire or greed be evil. He questioned himself, trying to conquer suffering while suffering acutely. He persevered despite his doubts and after six years of effort he fell over in a faint. A goatherd passed by with his flock and squeezed a little milk from the goat's udder into Gautama's mouth. The goatherd told Gautama to remember that he was of low caste, suggesting that perhaps the goatherd should not be serving him. Gautama replied, "It is virtue not caste that decides excellence in life." Some dancing girls came by singing a song about a lute. If the lute was strung too loosely, it uttered a dull sound; if it was strung too tightly, the noises were high and strained; but if it was strung properly, beautiful music would be struck from it (Kelen, 1969). Gautama took this message to heart. He realised that not by fierce deprivation could he attain wisdom any more than he could have attained it amidst the luxuries of his princely palace and he resolved to do away with extremes and find a middle path.

A young woman named Suyata prepared a pudding made of the richest cream in which she boiled the finest rice. She sweetened the pudding with honey, spiced it, poured butter over it and decorated it with flowers. She did this as an act of gratitude for she was with child after praying for some time to become pregnant and she decided to make a rich offering to Gautama. He, holy man of the forest, accepted the gift (Landaw and Brooke, 1992). He washed himself in the river and began to go to town daily; his health and beauty gradually returned. His five companions who had been suffering emerged from the wilderness. They were annoyed when they saw him, thinking of him as having given in, falling prey to luxury. They left in disgust.

He left and arrived at Bodh-Gaya. He felt that he was no closer to achieving the wisdom that he would need to deliver humanity from suffering than he had been before. He had indeed come a long way using his power of reason but there was more to do. He sat under a bodi tree and vowed not to stir until he had attained the supreme and absolute wisdom. The ancient tales do not agree how long he sat under the bodi tree. Some say several days, others several weeks. He went into trance past the realm of conscious reason into what lies beyond thought. Mara came and tempted him. Mara was outraged that Gautama had not gone home for a good meal when he abandoned his severe penances. Instead he took only enough nourishment so hunger could not interfere with his quest. Mara tempted Gautama with women and wealth. One by one he sent selfishness, hate, greed, ambition, pride, ignorance, fear and lust. He sent thunder, lightning and fire, boulders and lava from the mountains of the earth and streaking monsters. Gautama sat in light and could see the sickly illusion of their existence. He was becoming aware of a reality in which wisdom exists and has the same right to dominion on Earth as Mara's temptation (Kelen, 1969).

With his right hand he struck the Earth calling upon her to bear witness to this and the Earth opened up and swallowed the monstrosities that besieged him.

The light increased, his Buddha eye was opening. He was clairvoyant. He was a spark of energy that had been from the beginning. He was a Bodhisattva (World Teacher) and He was going to be enlightened.

His knowledge expanded and He surveyed the world of humanity in time and space, knew their thoughts, their feelings, their misery, their grandeur and He felt compassion. Such has happened in the lives of saints and prophets where enlightenment comes like a bolt of lightning from the sky. Enlightenment of low degree happens to everyone of us. The truth was revealed. He understood about the Law of Karma and the Law of Reincarnation and the role of ignorance, desire and attachment as

opposed to detachment. If ignorance ceases, wrong desire ceases and so do selfish efforts, self-love, craving, grasping, rebirth, sorrow, sickness, old age, death. In Him knowledge, insight and light arose to become the Wisdom. Gautama spent time then trying to find a way to explain His findings to humanity, to give them the needed light and wisdom.

The image that occurred to Him was of a forest pool in which the lotus grows with its root in the mud. Some plants striving upwards do not reach the surface of the water and their heads remain submerged. Other plants reach the surface barely and float upon it. Still others thrust their heads above the water and flower in splendour but all have their roots in the mud. Yet all strive upwards seeking light because it is in their nature to do so. Buddha was seized with immense compassion. It was the motivating force of His life. It helped to dissolve His self doubts and strengthen Him to fulfil His mission. Some merchants passed by and gave Him rice and honey. They knelt to Him reverently before they passed and could feel that they had been blessed. His old teachers Evrus, Ulara and Udraka had influenced Him deeply (Kelen, 1969).

He decided to search for the five disciples who had deserted Him in the wilderness and heard that they had gone to Benares which is now called Varanasi. When He found them He took some time to convince them to open to Him. They were skinny and still practising austerity. It was here that Gautama preached His first sermon under the trees in the deer park near Benares. He gave forth the Four Noble Truths.

The first Truth is that suffering exists. We are continuously plunged into it because of the soul's craving for sentient experience. The second Noble Truth is that suffering is caused by self-centred desire. Once this cause is pinpointed, it can be renounced, subdued and destroyed. The third Noble Truth is suffering can cease. The fourth that suffering can cease by following the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddha spoke about how there are two extremes that ought to be avoided - living a life of pleasure and living a life of deprivation. By avoiding these extremes and walking the Middle Path we find wisdom, insight, calm, knowledge, salvation and happiness. This Middle Path is the Eightfold Path. The Noble Eight fold Path gives a way of life based on simple virtues. The Buddha taught that it is the one who lives it, who makes the theory a practice, who can walk with the holy ones. Buddha spent the rest of His life explaining His reasoning and defining His notions. The Eightfold Path is a guide for the perfection of character. It maps out a way of life devoted to good with the reward of simple virtue. His teachings are explored further in *The Way of Compassion*.

Buddha gave his second sermon in order to further instruct His followers. The teachings of dharma which He gave forth had inherent beauty and common sense. Buddha quickly gathered followers. The first sixty disciples were the centre or the nucleus of the Sangha or the yellow-clad monks who are still active today.

In Uruvela He met Kasyapa and his brother, who were worshippers of Agni the Fire God. The brothers led 1000 disciples. When Buddha came they were worried that His miracles and teaching were so great that He would take their disciples. That was their fear the following day, the day of the great fire ceremony. Kasyapa thought, "I hope that He stays away from the feast." Buddha read his thoughts and on that day went to another village to beg for His food and eat it alone in the woods. The next day Kasyapa asked Him where He had been. The Buddha replied "Kasyapa, did you not hope that I would stay away." Kasyapa confessed to his shame that the unworthy thought had entered his mind. In the end Kasyapa, his brother and their thousand disciples cut off their hair and beards and became disciples of Lord Gautama (Kelen, 1969).

Once His monks had been instructed in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path He taught them the eight qualifications of the missionary. These are to be able to hear and to make others listen; to be able to learn, to remember and understand, and to make others understand; to be skilful in dealing with enemies as well as friends and to be no maker of quarrels. With this He sent them out across the Ganges Valley to preach the dharma.

In order to fully teach the monks Buddha had to give up the idea of total homelessness, ordering them to take retreat during the rains. For three months of the year the monks would come together under shelter. King Bimbisara of Magadaha provided the shelter and asked for instruction from Buddha in return and received it. This instruction served to satisfy the king's hopes and he asked to be received as a lay disciple. The rules for joining the Sangha were simple. One had to be at least twenty and honestly wish to learn the dharma. Buddha received all aspirants and ordained them until the numbers grew; then He passed His power of ordination to the monks and prescribed the ceremony. This formula is still used today and is known as the three refuges. It is said three times "I take my refuge in the Buddha, I take my refuge in the dharma, I take my refuge in the Sangha." Vows were taken of poverty, celibacy and harmlessness. The monks were allowed to have the clothes they wore and one extra garment. The monk may also own a bowl, a needle, a razor, a filter to strain his drinking water and to have a narrow wooden bed slightly raised from the ground to prevent him from crushing ants in his sleep. He could eat one meal a day before noon which could be obtained by begging from householders. This was not compulsory, the monk had to want it (Kelen, 1969). A monk might leave this life at will if he thought

he would be better off married but a practising monk had to keep himself separate from women. The monks were taught to use Buddha's own words which they had learned by heart and be ready to preach the dharma at all times. There was some criticism of Buddha's methods because so many men from all castes were joining. His Teachings went against what had been the accepted culture for so long.

Suddhodana yearned for the sight of his son. The Sakyas, Suddodana's people, had not seen Gautama for many years. Suddhodana sent messengers to invite Buddha home and nine times he lost those messengers to the Sangha. Then Suddhodana sent a childhood playmate of Siddhartha called Udayain the Black. Like the rest, Udayain entered the order but after two months he managed to recollect why he had come. He told Buddha by reciting a poem of sixty verses to Buddha, but hidden in the middle of this poem, which was mostly in praise of nature, was a verse containing reference to the Buddha's family (Kelen, 1969).

Buddha left at once with a company of monks as is the custom. Even these days a prophet often remains unrecognised in his place of birth. The Sakyas prepared a pleasant grove for Him. Buddha took His begging bowl and went about the town from house to house. Yasodhara sighted him and told King Suddhodana. The king rushed to Him, asking why He was disgracing His family in this way. Buddha replied that it was custom. Suddhodana replied it was not his custom to beg in the street and Buddha affirmed that it was His. Gautama spoke with His father and made him see how possessive love is a greed of the mind which eventually brings suffering. Suddhodana's knot of resentment loosened, he touched the Path and he led his son home (Bercholz and Kohn, 1993).

Gautama went to Yasodhara. He discovered that she had been through enormous and indescribable grief. The palace with all its allurements felt like a dungeon to her without her beloved. Her only consolation was her son Rahula. She had followed in Gautama's footsteps. She had worn yellow robes, taken only one meal a day, lay on a narrow bed and gone through a similar process of renunciation and inner contemplation (Kelen, 1969). Throughout the six years during Gautama's struggle for enlightenment, she had watched His actions closely and done likewise.

Rahula was now seven years old and Yasodhara told him his father had returned. She told Rahula to go and tell Buddha he was the prince and ask for his inheritance. The Lord Gautama gave His son His spiritual inheritance and ordained Him. Rahula became an aspirant and when he was twenty he was ordained as a monk (Kelen, 1969). The Buddha taught him much, including the value of truthfulness and of reflection. Some of this teaching is described later in *The Way of Compassion*.

Nanda, Buddha's half-brother was heir to the throne. He, too, had left the worldly scene and followed the Lord Buddha. Suddhodana found the loss of his son and the ordaining of Nanda and Rahula particularly painful. Out of compassion for His father Gautama formulated a rule that no one could enter the order without parental permission. Buddha then took leave of His family. His cousins Ananda and Devadatta who had been His childhood friends and rivals decided to join the order. Their barber, Upali, had come with them to take their jewellery back to Kapilavastu. The bundle was made up; Upali set out for home. He got a short way when he felt he, too, should enter. He hung his bundle on the tree and returned to join the order. Upali a man of considerable intellect became one of the main leaders of the Sangha (Kelen, 1969). Ananda, as mentioned earlier became His disciple, companion, confidant, secretary and friend.

It is said that some wealthy monks became bestowers of alms to the unprotected and acquired beautiful parks upon which monasteries were built. Two such monasteries, the Jetavana monastery and Pubarana were favourite residences of Buddha who spent His last twenty rainy seasons at one or the other of them. For a good part of the year Buddha was on the road preaching and teaching across the Ganges Valley, passing through villages and towns.

Buddha gave of His heart and mind to His monks of the Sangha. They were His thousands of sons and the good souls in whom He would plant the dharma. He taught His monks to apply their teachings to their fellow brethren and to have compassion for each other, especially when others were ill or sick. Of sickness He said - "teach yourself: though my body is sick my mind shall not be sick" (Kelen, 1969).

When Suddhodana died, Buddha was present and He guided his father safely to the state of Nirvana. Following this was a cremation ceremony according to Hindu custom. Prajapati and some other women came to Buddha asking to be part of the order. At that time Prajapati, as you may remember, was His widowed foster mother.

Amongst the Sangha there were sometimes squabbles and some dissension about what Buddha's followers would or wouldn't do. He often tried to restore harmony and at times got tired of this and went off into the forest spending months in deep meditation. During this time the monks would calm their passions and ask for forgiveness which Buddha would gladly give. Ananda discussed with Buddha whether women were capable of realising the higher states of consciousness, whether they understood the stages of the Path and whether they could attain Arhatship (Arhatship is a very advanced stage of initiation which is approaching saint-hood). Buddha replied that they could and so women were permitted to enter the order with appropriate conditions made.

Devadatta had joined the Sangha at thirty-nine years of age. He spent thirty-three years peacefully at work on right concentration. He was Buddha's rival from early youth. Devadatta was caught up with the use of "iddi." Today we call this psychism. In time Devadatta became conceited and felt he should lead the Sangha instead of his cousin Gautama. The power of the iddi left him as this thought took shape and began to overpower him. Buddha knew of his evil wishes and told that they would be shortly revealed (Kelen, 1969). When Buddha was seventy-two years of age Devadatta suggested that he should retire and let him be the leader.

Buddha commanded Sariputra, a close and devoted monk, to let it be known that Devadatta was once a good monk but was no longer and that whatever he said or did, it was not in accordance with the Sangha. This aggravated Devadatta who then incited Prince Ajatasatru to kill his father, King Bimbisara and told that he would kill Gautama and become the Buddha. The prince thought Devadatta had great insight and worked himself up to go and kill his father. Some minister seized him and searched him and found the dagger he had intended to use. He was taken before King Bimbisara who asked him, "why did you want to kill me, son?"

"Because I wanted the kingdom."

"Ah, . . . you want the kingdom then take it." King Bimbisara abdicated his position, leaving all his troubles in the lap of his son. Because he obtained the kingdom in this way it confirmed Ajatasatru's opinion that Devadatta knew exactly what he was talking about and he gave Devadatta a troupe of men to assassinate Buddha. Buddha was visiting a different town and Devadatta knew the path by which He would return. Thirty-one men were stationed and armed with swords, shields, bows and arrows. But the assassins upon sight of Buddha were moved to listen to Him and instead became part of the Sangha. Devadatta then occupied himself with plots against Buddha's life (Kelen, 1969). It is said that one such attempt was to let an angry elephant loose in Buddha's path; as the elephant charged down the street emitting angry noises, the crowd scattered left and right climbing house tops. But Buddha sent His love towards the excited animal and it calmed down and stood still to be stroked.

Devadatta continued his vendetta and he had his own following. He tried to convince Buddha to change the rules to prohibit monks from living in monasteries or accepting invitations to eat at other people's houses or accepting gifts from non-monks or sleeping under roofs or eating fish or flesh. Buddha's views were clear. He stated that who ever wished to, could do those things. His view was that any monk could eat fish or flesh provided he has not seen, heard, or suspected that a living thing had been killed especially to provide him with a meal. So Devadatta and his followers left the order and lived as they chose. Their sect survived for several centuries (Kelen, 1969).

Buddha lived to see His tribe, the Sakyas, wiped out by the Kosalas. It was the wrath of King Prasenajit that caused this when he found out that the Sakya maiden who was his bride had low caste blood, as she was the daughter of a Sakyan noble and a slave woman. Most of the Sakyans were killed, only a few escaped. Buddha was eighty and those around him were getting old, too. Sariputra returned home, made a Buddhist of his mother and then died in his bed. Upali, the former barber, took Sariputra's position (Kelen, 1969).

Meanwhile, Ajatsatru had managed to kill King Bimbisara and was eager to build his empire. He intended to begin by overcoming the Vajjis, his northern neighbours, and bringing them to ruin. He sent his prime minister to tell Buddha about his plan. Gautama Buddha travelled north after this interview to Patna in the land of the Vajjis. He arrived in Vaisali, the Vajji capital and took up residence in a beautiful grove. Ambapali, who owned it, gave the grove to the Sangha. Buddha found shelter nearby during the rains and became violently ill and for a while lay near death. He exerted His will to abate the sickness, sensing that He had to take leave of His disciples first. Ananda asked Him what His instructions were for the order, Buddha replied He had no instructions. All His life He had taught the dharma. He told Ananda "Be ye lamps unto yourselves, be ye refuge to yourselves, hold fast as a refuge to the dharma. Look not for refuge to anyone beside yourselves. Those who look to themselves will reach the higher wisdom" (Kelen, 1969)

Buddha had three months left. In February 483 BC, He gave discourses suggesting that the monks kept watch on their own heart, share and persevere in kindness of action, speech and thought. He taught them how to discern false doctrine. He suggested that when people say "The Blessed One says this" and "this is the truth," what has been said should be placed beside the dharma and the doctrines and the rules and compared. If it doesn't fit, they will know that The Blessed One did not say it, it is not the truth and the teaching has been wrongly grasped by that brother.

Buddha was approaching His death. Ananda asked Him what he was to do with His remains. Buddha replied "treat me like a king," which meant He wished to be cremated. He gave specific instructions for His body to be wrapped in new cloth and then in cotton wool and to be placed in a coffin of iron and burned on a pyre. The coffin was then to be placed in a cairn at a cross road where people would pass by and leave flowers remembering Him and His dharma. Ananda felt great grief at the thought of His Master leaving. Buddha told him not to grieve and spoke words of praise for His disciple Ananda. He was at Sala grove and He sent Ananda to the head men of Kusinara to tell them He was dying. People by the hundreds came to pay respects to the dying Buddha. A wanderer called Subhadra asked to see the Buddha because he did not understand His teaching. Subhadra asked if other famous teachers

understood the truth. He told Subhadra to let that rest and listen. He taught him the dharma and ordained him into the Sangha (Kelen, 1969). He called Ananda close and said it may be that some think the word of Master is ended, we have no teacher anymore, but this is not so. The dharma is there and the rules. They are your teacher.

Gautama told them about His successor Maitreya, Who when it is time for another Buddha age to begin, will arise in the world. Of Him Buddha is reported to have said, “He is endowed with knowledge and right conduct, a knower of the worlds, incomparable, a teacher of Gods and humanity; and He will proclaim and make known the Doctrine,” (Kelen, 1969) which will make known the Laws and Way of the Heart. Maitreya now sits as the Bodhisattva, preparing for His coming as the future Buddha in 500 years.

Then the Buddha is reported to have said, “Brethren, anything that has a beginning must have an end. Work out your salvation with diligence.” He put His head on His arm; lying quietly on His right side with one foot on the other He passed into a trance and onwards to the higher life.

Siddhartha Gautama’s higher calling had taken Him from His family to the forest in order to achieve a higher understanding. His calling was beyond His own need to understand and served a higher purpose. At this point Gautama was attracting people to give them the wisdom he had found and all the monks around Him were taking in the teachings and finding answers to their search within. Yasodhara had changed. She found compassion, as Gautama did, through suffering Her grief. She went through it all with Gautama and many women began to follow Her like the monks followed Him. The monks and nuns were then sent out to do as the Buddha did, to attract people and spread the wisdom. Compassion can touch all beings who have open hearts. It creates an avenue to the heart for the love and Light to enter.

Through the Lord Buddha and the example of His life as Gautama, we see the value of love and truth and the power of what it is to be good and loving. We see the value of Light and wisdom. When love is true it goes straight to the heart of the other and helps the other to come to love. Yasodhara knew this and She gave this love to the Lord Buddha. Through Her enormous grief in that life Her heart opened to greater love and compassion. This enabled Gautama to find what He was looking for.

The monks and the nuns were searching for the wisdom and light, but by now Gautama and Yasodhara already knew it. Through these Great Souls and Their Compassion, the Great Wisdom could come

to Earth and it is these Great Souls Who, together with Maitreya will bring forth the Teaching and Doctrine of the Heart.

LADY YASODHARA

Her voice sounded forth with pearls of wisdom, pure and innocent in its childlike expansion of truth. It contained a wisdom of the divine, the higher mind full of love, wisdom, compassion, understanding and enlightenment. I could see Her standing on a golden bridge. Her words came forth in golden song, stimulating the joy in my heart, the knowing in my mind and the essence of the "I Am." It was the sound that created the effect within me and which helped me come to know Her. The content seemed unimportant. For a moment every cell in my being was connected to and one with every cell in Hers. Light synthesised and vision came forth of the eternal now. The path of what had been, revealed the path of what was to come. Rainbow colours danced within and the golden bridge stood illumined. I was part of that bridge. I allowed myself to be one within its Light and became one with the Sun.

THE WAY OF COMPASSION

THE CESSATION OF SUFFERING

The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path are the teachings which the Lord Gautama Buddha brought forth in His embodiment as Gautama Buddha two thousand five hundred years ago. In that embodiment Siddhartha Gautama (as He was called before His enlightenment) went through a process of renunciation. Renunciation is the process of giving up, or of making a sacrifice. Siddhartha Gautama gave up his right to be king of his people in order to become a holy man, and to live a holy life. He gave up the opportunity to have a life based on material wealth and power in the search for the knowledge that would help release humanity from its suffering. His greatest sacrifice was that of not being with his beloved wife Yasodhara. His renunciation led him to become Gautama Buddha, the Enlightened One. It also led him to His Teachings which, when followed, gradually bring all who live by them to enlightenment.

BUDDHA'S LIFE STORY

In *A Manifestation of Compassion* we witnessed how, in spite of his father's effort to keep all knowledge of worldly suffering from his eyes, the young prince witnessed suffering in the world. When Siddhartha Gautama witnessed age, sickness and death, the flame of compassion grew strongly in him and motivated him to renounce the material pleasures and sensual pleasures that were so available to him. He went forth into a homeless life alone, with the clear purpose of extinguishing craving, identifying the cause of suffering and finding the way out of suffering for humanity. At age twenty-nine, he yearned to know more. His journey was a personal one, he had to go within to find the wisdom. For six years he practised the utmost in physical austerity until he subdued lust and developed and controlled his mind. Finally he realised that he could not find the truth he sought in austerity. It was not until he realised this that he opened to the full fruit of enlightenment. It was the full moon of May and he was thirty-five years old. His renunciation had shown him that enlightenment was not to be found in the extremes of pleasure or self-torture. During this period, which is known as the "Great Renunciation", Buddha was able to find the Middle Way. Gautama Buddha renounced His kingship for the wisdom. Through meditation, Buddha was able to link Himself to the wisdom through His faculty of intuition until He found pure enlightenment. He rose in consciousness.

Buddha discovered that in order to awake from ignorance and come to a place full of knowledge, that is, to become enlightened, we need to comprehend the Four Noble Truths".

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The Four Noble Truths point the way to the cessation of suffering. They relate to suffering and our acceptance and understanding of it. Buddha suggests that suffering, feeling pain or distress is created by our 'clinging' and/or 'grasping' to psycho-physical forces that are impermanent, that is, ever changing from moment to moment. The psycho-physical forces exist on the levels of:-

1. matter
2. feeling or sensation
3. perception
4. mental formations (patterns of thought created by our minds)
5. consciousness

Buddha calls these the five aggregates of clinging and suggests that in order to be free of the frustration, disappointment and mental torment which we find unsatisfactory and which is created from our clinging to that which is impermanent, we need to cultivate detachment, where there is no clinging to one thing or another; rather, there is a letting go. Basically, he is saying that we suffer because of our attachment to that which is transitory. We try to make permanent and have control over forces which we cannot possess or have power over. The five aggregates of clinging are the fundamental assumptions at the basis of the Four Noble Truths. When trying to understand the Four Noble Truths it is helpful to keep this in mind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We must acknowledge that suffering exists. This is Buddha's first Noble Truth - that of the existence of suffering or 'dukkha' which is the word for suffering in the Pali language. Buddha suggests the importance of knowing suffering (pain and/or distress). He teaches that suffering dominates all life and is the fundamental problem of life. Evidence of the reality of suffering in daily life comes when we look at illness, aging, discontent and the awareness of death. Of course Buddha acknowledges that pleasure and happiness exist also. Buddha urges us to see suffering as suffering and happiness as happiness, to acknowledge the existence of both states of being. He warns against attaching too much importance to fleeting pleasures because of their impermanence, which makes the consequence of attachment, sooner or later, to that of discontentment. He suggests viewing the sentient world (the world of our senses, where the desire life has precedence) in its proper perspective. He teaches us to create an inner state of peace which is not disturbed by loss or gain, blame or praise, well being or adversity, through

right living and balanced meditation. He suggests that by acknowledging that suffering exists we help ourselves to accept life in all its fullness and let go of our expectations of life, ourselves and others. We can cultivate detachment as a remedy to let go of suffering.

ACCEPTANCE

The second Noble Truth is the arising of suffering or 'samudaya.' Here we see the role of craving and desire in the creation of suffering. At the root of suffering are desire or worldly attachments which leave us open to suffering. For example, if our circumstances or events in life are not as we desire them to be, we find this unsatisfactory and become distressed. This is how suffering arises. For example, we may have the desire to experience pleasantness and/or the desire to see an end to unpleasantness. When something in our life is not as we would like we find it unpleasant. We see that the cause of this feeling of unpleasantness in us is because our life is not going as we had planned. However, the fact that life is unfolding as it does is not actually the cause of our suffering. Suffering is the result of our attachment to life being the way we would like it to be. It has nothing to do with what is happening in our life. Thus we can see that by our attachment to a particular form of life, a life without suffering, we create suffering because we do not accept life as it is. We manufacture suffering and we do not accept the suffering given to us; given to us that we may develop compassion. The latter suffering is legitimate suffering. It is God-given and comes according to our karma. If we have more acceptance of life with its ups and downs, highs and lows, we find that we suffer much less. We are not expecting life to be all pleasant so we do not suffer the frustration and disappointment that comes when an event which we deem to be unpleasant occurs. Eventually we cease to see such events as 'unpleasant.' This leads us to the third Noble Truth.

DETACHMENT

For suffering to cease detachment needs to be cultivated. The third Noble Truth is the cessation of suffering or 'nirodha.' It is the complete cessation - giving up, abandoning, release and detachment - from craving; the subduing of the sensation of suffering. Buddha suggests that when one gives up craving one also gives up suffering and all that pertains to it. The way to eliminate suffering then, is to eliminate desire. This leads us to a place where whatever feeling we experience, whether it be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, we experience it without being attached to it and without being bound to it. We come then to experience life as it is, without judgement about what is considered a 'good' or 'bad' experience. We no longer divide up the experience of the circumstances and events in our lives in that

way. Life simply is as it is and the suffering, which we would otherwise experience because of our attachment to having our desires met, eases.

THE WAY OF COMPASSION

The fourth Noble Truth reveals the way to achieve the removal of desire. The Way of Compassion, and of honouring the fourth Noble Truth, is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path in our daily living. It is a guide or discipline by which we can live which assists us to reach enlightenment by finding the Middle Way in life and not living in the extremes. It teaches us how to cease to identify with the material world and to find Spirit by teaching us how to live in a detached manner. It warns us against fanaticism, which takes us to the extremes, and enables us to find balanced attitudes which govern our life and bring it into balance. Buddha called it a Middle Path because it avoids two extremes, the extremes of indulgence in sensual pleasures and that of self-torture. We have seen how Buddha, through his experience in the palace filled with sensual pleasure and luxury, discovered that this was not the way to true happiness and deliverance. Six years of vigorous mortification which he practised in search of purification and final deliverance also brought him no reward. By avoiding these two extremes he followed a path of moral and mental training and through self-experience discovered the Middle Path. The Noble Eightfold Path is sometimes known as the 'Middle Way' or the 'Middle Path.' The Noble Eightfold Path is a path of right relations to God and our fellow-beings. It helps us to learn to love in the spirit of Right Human Relations and Buddha has taught us it leads to the end of suffering as we know it.

The eight requirements of this discipline are generally labelled as is shown in the left-hand column of figure 1. In figure 1 the steps that are generally referred to in most Buddhist literature are listed. In the right-hand column the key to the essence of each step of the Eight-fold Path is given. These keys together make up the Way of Compassion. When looking at the steps on the Eightfold Path it is important to understand that the steps are interwoven. We are often learning about a few steps at once and as we live our lives we need to strive to remember all the steps in order to try to live by the discipline. You will also notice that the word "right" is placed before each step. Simply put, this is because there is also a path which is not noble where the word wrong is put before each step. When we do this we come to be quite clear about what "right" is referring to, that is, the noble and balanced way of being.

The eight steps on the Path that are taught by Gautama Buddha help us to acquire wisdom, virtue, and the power of concentration.

1. Wisdom - through right understanding/belief
2. Virtue - through right speech, right action and right livelihood
3. The power of Concentration - through right effort, right mindfulness/remembrance, and right concentration

These steps *lead to* freedom. Through genuine cultivation of the mind and the control of our physical and verbal actions, purity is obtained. Through self-exertion and self-development we find freedom. Freedom is not attained all at once. Training is gradual, the doctrine and the discipline bring freedom gradually, through practice. The Eightfold Path is the practical guidance and instructions given by the Buddha to remove conflict due to suffering. It provides a map of how we gain final peace and happiness. In the following chapters we will go through the steps one by one.

THE EIGHTFOLD PATH THE STEPS	THE WAY OF COMPASSION THE KEY OF ESSENCE
Right understanding / belief	Truth
Right thought	Goodwill
Right speech	Loving kindness
Right action	Harmlessness
Right livelihood	Dharma
Right effort	Dedication
Right mindfulness / remembrance	Awareness
Right concentration / meditation	Liberation

Figure 1 - Steps on the Path to Enlightenment

TRUTH

There is no religion higher than truth

The first step on the Way of Compassion is truth. This involves seeing life as it is and realising the true nature of existence. Our ideas, views, opinions and ideologies, if ill-founded, take us off the path before we begin. Attachment to the material world and denial of the inner world does not help us to find right understanding. Right understanding/belief means to understand and believe in life as it is and not as it appears to be. To believe in a philosophy of life which is not based in truth is to create suffering. In Buddhism right understanding also involves understanding oneself through self-examination and self-observation. It involves acknowledgment of the higher Laws and paying systematic attention to them. Right understanding/belief involves the seeking of truth. It is the key note of Buddhism. When we have blind belief, wrong views or simply speculate, we live in ignorance of the real nature of life. When we access our inner wisdom we develop right understanding and right belief.

Henry Olcott, who was one of the Theosophists responsible for the establishment of the Theosophical Society with Madame Blavatsky in the late nineteenth century, has written a good deal of valuable Theosophical literature outlining some of the fundamental Buddhist beliefs as an appendix to “The Buddhist Catechism” (1982 edition). He tells us that “Buddhists are taught to show the same tolerance, forbearance, and brotherly love to all men, without distinction; and an unswerving kindness towards the members of the animal kingdom” (p. 128). Olcott tells us also that Buddhists believe that the universe evolved, it was not created; and it functions according to Law, not according to the caprice of any God. Gautama, who was also called ‘Sakya Muni’ taught that ignorance produces desire and that unsatisfied desire is the cause of rebirth, and that rebirth is the cause of sorrow. To get rid of sorrow, therefore, it is necessary to escape rebirth and desire; and to extinguish desire, it is necessary to destroy ignorance, as ignorance fosters wrong belief. For example, the illusory and illogical idea that there is only one embodiment for human beings, and the illusion that this one life is followed by states of unchangeable pleasure or torments are forms of ignorance that foster wrong belief. The latter belief gives the idea of a punishing God who will send us to hell if we do not behave. Olcott (1982) suggests that Buddhists believe that ignorance is dispersed by the persevering practice of an all-embracing altruism (a practice where the welfare of others is considered and sought after) in conduct, development of intelligence, wisdom in thought, and destruction of desire for the lower personal pleasures. Olcott (1982) also tells us that the essence of Buddhism, as summed up by the Tathagatha (Buddha) himself, is:

*To cease from all sin,
To get virtue,
To purify the heart (p.131).*

Buddhists also believe in karma, where “the merits and demerits of a being in past existences determine the condition in the present one” (Olcott, 1982, p.132) Through right action (see *Harmlessness*) and right livelihood (see *Dharma*) we are able to remove obstacles to good karma.

Gautama Buddha taught it to be “the duty of a parent to have his child educated in science and literature.” He also taught that “no-one should believe what is spoken by any sage, written in any book, or affirmed by tradition, unless it accords with reason,” (Olcott, 1982, pp.132-133).

The Lord Buddha has said

We must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumours, as such; nor writings by sages, because sages wrote them: nor fancies that we might suspect has been inspired in us by a Deva (that is, in presumed spiritual inspiration); nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems an analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our teachers or masters. But we are to believe when the writing, doctrine or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness. “For this,” says He in concluding, “I taught you not to believe merely because you have heard, but when you believed of your consciousness, then to act accordingly and abundantly”

(Blavatsky, 1963, p. 401).

In Theosophy right belief is believing in something greater than yourself that becomes an ideal to reach for. Right belief entails recognition and acceptance of the Divine Laws, such as the Law of Karma and the Law of Reincarnation. It involves belief in the soul and the process of evolution.

GOODWILL

If in the mind there is some obstacle, so also in the voice or action

The second step on the Way of Compassion involves goodwill. Goodwill comes as a result of right thought. Developing right thought means developing purity of mind and in so doing avoiding feelings that obstruct our progress to perfection such as lust, malice and cruelty. Right understanding/belief gives rise to right thought and affects our speech and actions. The way we think plays an important part in creating the good results that the mind can produce. In Buddhism right thought is renunciation, goodwill, harmlessness and compassion. If we have thoughts that are focused on our sense desires, ill will and harm, we harm ourselves and others, obstruct wisdom and cause pain. We need to practice right thought in order to root out the causes of negativity within us like lust, hate and illusion or ignorance.

In the section on truth we saw that right understanding roots out delusion or ignorance. Right thought helps us release our desires and ill will. We can remove our negative thoughts through the correct practice of renunciation (surrender), goodwill and compassion. This does not mean that we need to struggle with our thoughts; rather, we observe our thoughts and study their nature. Gradually we cultivate good thoughts that will counteract the negative ones and clear the mind so that it can observe them without prejudice and find their origin. It is up to us whether we let our negative thoughts grow strong, or whether we work to weaken, or remove them. This teaching is worked with today in the field of psychology.

What we do with our thoughts depends upon our attachments and resentments. If we become resentful we cultivate negative thoughts towards others. We hold on to, or attach to our grievance and through the associated thoughts of resentment we cause others harm. Our mind can only grasp the higher truth if we are ready to give up these thoughts of sense desire. Only when the mind is released from such thoughts can we realise the truth and gain right understanding. If the mind continues with such thoughts we cannot sense the truth because we see through the distorted perceptions that our thoughts create. If the personality can't control its negative thoughts, those thoughts come to permeate the whole personality and can take control of the mind.

When we have right thought, actions of goodwill and of harmlessness follow. Right thought brings forth loving kindness and compassion which are conducive to holy living. Kindness and compassion help us move away from selfishness and disharmony. These can be cultivated towards all people, irrespective of race, colour, creed.

To understand right thought, let us look at the nature of wrong thought. We can see the consequences of wrong thought in the following examples:-

Example 1 - If we have uncontrolled sensual affection or lust, and that desire is not being met, we may get angry and frustrated, and create intense ill will through our angry thoughts which could bring about injury, harm and violence resulting in death, sorrow and lamentation.

Example 2 - We develop a self-talk that is finding fault in everyone and everything, including ourselves. The negative thoughts we have about everyone and ourselves creates mistrust and develops suspicious qualities within us and sharpens our critical nature to the point where we become cruel to others in thought and action rather than kind and loving.

Right thought will likewise create its own consequences that are related to the quality of thought.

It is only through gradual training that we can check the mind and rule it, and not become a slave to it. If we wish to do that we need to cultivate calmness and virtuous conduct, and live in truth. In that way we may be able to conquer ourselves. We reach the destination gradually by continuous effort and determination.

Loving kindness is the best antidote for anger in ourselves and for those who are angry with us. It should be extended with a free and boundless heart. The teaching of Lord Jesus "Love thy neighbour" is relevant here. Buddha taught even if others speak unkindly of you, you should not worry or have thoughts of enmity or spite. You should speak up, however, and state "for this reason that is false", "for this reason this is untrue," "this is not in us." Buddha does not believe in overcoming anger by anger; of this he is reported to have said,

Hatred never by hatred is appeased. In this world, by love alone, it is appeased. This is an ancient principle.

(Piyadassi, 1987, p.118)

The power of loving kindness is illustrated by the life of Buddha in many of the stories told about him. Soma Thera and Piyadassi Thera have written the following on Buddha's teachings of love:

Through love one adds to the fund of human happiness, one makes the world brighter, nobler and purer and prepares it for the good life better than in any other way. There is

no ill-luck worse than hatred, it is said, and no safety from others' hostility greater than the heart of love, the heart in which hate is dead ...

If one has developed a love that is truly great, rid of the desire to hold and to possess, that strong clean love which is untarnished with lust of any kind, that love which does not expect material advantage and profit from the act of loving, that love which is firm but not grasping, unshakeable but not tied down, gentle and settled, hard and penetrating as a diamond but unhurting, helpful but not interfering, cool, invigorating, giving more than taking, not proud but dignified, not sloppy yet soft, the love that leads one to the heights of clean achievement, then, in such a one can there be no ill-will at all. Love is an active force. Every act of the loving one is done with the stainless mind to help, to succour, to cheer, to make the paths of others easier, smoother and more adapted to the conquest of sorrow, the winning of the highest bliss. The way to develop love is through thinking out the evils of hate, and the advantages of non-hate; through thinking out according to actuality, according to karma, that really there is none to hate, that hate is a foolish way of feeling which breeds more and more darkness, that obstructs right understanding. Hate restricts; love releases. Hatred strangles; love enfranchises. Hatred bring remorse; love brings peace. Hatred agitates; love quietens, stills, calms. Hatred divides; love unites. Hatred hardens; love softens. Hatred hinders; love helps. And thus through a correct study and appreciation of the effects of hatred and the benefits of love, should one develop love.

(Piyadassi, 1987, p.119)

Compassion is another aspect of right thought. The Buddha was the great Compassionate One. By example He radiated His compassion towards all living beings. His teachings are permeated with the sublime quality of compassion. When one has compassion there can be no selfishness or hard-heartedness. It is the heart of Buddhism to say that all virtues, all goodness have righteousness, love and compassion as their basis. Compassion is a tender quality of heart which guides understanding and goes hand-in-hand with it. It is important not to confuse compassion with manifestations of sadness, sentimentality or feeling of mental pain or grief. Compassion does not revolve around I, me or mine. True compassion has behind it right motive and a heart that trembles at the sight of another's distress. When a person is compassionate he or she does not crave for remuneration nor tries to exploit the situation for his or her own ends. The help given to another is given freely from the heart in accordance with feelings of true kind-heartedness. As mentioned earlier, compassion produces selfless actions that bring joy. For example, consider that someone is hungry and you give them food. You will become

joyful simply because now they are not hungry, not because you have given them something which makes you somehow special. Compassion can be put into action not only in the material world but also through things such as guiding people along the right path and giving strength and moral support to people. If we have loving kindness and compassion in our thoughts and ruling our actions, we naturally let go of energies such as suspicion, fear, jealousy, arrogance, greed, hate and delusion. To establish mental harmony, right thought and well being, a life of love, understanding and compassion needs to be cultivated.

LOVING KINDNESS

*With the tenderness of Spirit the voice becomes softened,
with the hardness of Spirit the voice becomes hardened.*

Hazrat Inayat Khan

When one speaks sincerely and with loving kindness one has developed the quality of right speech. This is the third step on the Way of Compassion. Right speech is about cultivating speech that is positive and loving. If we are to cultivate right speech we should refrain from telling lies and gossip and should address people in a kind and tolerant manner. Our speech should not be loud, excited or opinionated and should avoid inflaming the passions of others. The language we use can be gentle, soothing to the ear and loving in such a way as to reach the heart. It can be courteous, friendly and agreeable to many. Vain talk can be avoided - that is talk that appeases the ego of the speaker. Choosing the right time to speak, and speaking only what is useful and is of the Law is a discipline which needs to be learned in order to conquer right speech. Timing is important here, it is important to learn to speak only when needed. To do this we need to work to give up negativity, cultivate the good, and cleanse our minds. To do this we need great strength of mind, effort and determination.

The Lord Buddha stated the precepts in positive terms:

Giving up slander ... he lives reconciling those at variance, and strengthening those who are friendly, delighting and rejoicing in concord he speaks words conducive to reconciliation. Giving up harsh speech, he says what is gentle, pleasing to the ear, affectionate . . . giving up idle chatter, he speaks at the right time in accordance with facts, to the purpose, in agreement with the doctrine (Dharma) and discipline, words worthy of reassuring (in the heart) reasonable, appropriate, discriminating and to the point.

(Piyadassi, 1987, p. 134)

Here the Buddha speaks of the need to work towards purification. Before doing good we must cease doing evil. Speech should not be dominated by thoughts of greed, anger, pride, selfishness and jealousy. When a person talks too much, calmness and right thinking are prevented, and the danger of uttering slander or harsh words is increased. Speech is of great value to us as we can express thoughts and ideas which can be shared with others. If we could tame our tongues the world would be a better place. Speech gone amuck can create havoc.

In right speech four abstentions are mentioned in Buddha's teachings. These are abstention from:-

1. falsehood
2. slander
3. harsh speech
4. idle chatter.

1. Let us look at the first virtue of right speech which is to abstain from falsehood and speak the truth. When people do this they become sincere, upright and dependable. They do not stray from the truth to win fame or please others, though they may seem strict. Buddha taught this principle to his seven-year old son Rahula, as one of his first lessons:

Buddha poured a little water into a vessel and said "Do you see Rahula, this little quantity of water left in the vessel?"

"Yes venerable sir."

"Even so, Rahula, insignificant is the monkship of those who are not ashamed to lie."

Then the Master having thrown the water away said, "Do you note, Rahula, that little quantity of water thrown away."

"Yes venerable Sir."

"Even so, Rahula, discarded indeed is the monkship of those who are not ashamed to lie."

Then the Master overturned the water vessel and said, "Do you see this vessel that has been overturned?"

“Yes venerable Sir.”

“Even so, Rahula, overturned indeed is the monkship of those not ashamed to lie.”

Then the Master having upturned the vessel addressed the novice.

“Do you Rahula see this water vessel that is void, empty?”

“Yes venerable Sir.”

Even so, Rahula, void and empty is the monkship of those not ashamed to lie. Even so, Rahula, of anyone that is not ashamed to lie I say that there is not evil that he cannot do. Wherefore Rahula thus indeed should you train yourself not even for fun will I tell a lie.

(Narada, p.73)

2. The second virtue to abstain from is slander. Slander entails making a false statement intended to damage someone’s reputation. This entails two crimes simultaneously. Firstly, that of falsehood and secondly, that of intent to harm. Slander destroys friendship. In the Pali language the word literally means ‘breaking up of fellowship.’ “Be united, wrangle not. Concord alone is commendable. Since we depend on one another we must learn to live together in peace, harmony and friendship” (Kelen, 1969, p.27). This was inscribed by Asoka, one of Buddha’s disciples, on a stone, and is said to come from one of Buddha’s discourses.

3. The third virtue is to abstain from harsh words and be polite. Harsh words can cause agony whereas gentle words can melt the hardest heart. We should think twice before we speak ill of anyone for it is an attempt to damage their character and good name. A person’s speech is often a good indicator of their character. Language that comes from the heart is always graceful and full of power.

4. The fourth and last virtue is to abstain from frivolous talk and gossip. People assert themselves at the expense of others. Buddha suggested that when the monks have gathered together they should either talk about the teachings or be silent. In the discourse of good speech, Buddha is reported to have said,

The good say noble speech is apt. Speak the doctrine or teachings. Say what is pleasant not what is unpleasant. Speak what is true not lies. Speak only words that do not bring remorse or hurt another. That is good speech indeed. Truth is immortal speech. It is an ancient law. In truth, weal, and dharma, the sages are established.

One does not become a wise man just by talking a lot, neither is he versed in the doctrine because he speaks much. Similarly to keep silent does not turn a foolish ignoramus into a sage. We must learn to speak when speech is needed.

(Thera Piyadassi, 1987, p. 141)

This can be likened to the four gates used in Theosophy. The four gates suggest that before we speak we put what we are intending to say through the following questions, or gates:-

1. Is it true?
2. Is it kind?
3. Is it necessary?
4. Is it the right time?

The four gates ensure that our speech is harmless.

HARMLESSNESS

Truth is the goal. Love is the way.

Ananda Tara Shan

Harmlessness is a necessary prerequisite for right action. It is the fourth step on the Way of Compassion. In this step, which Buddha calls right action, Buddha suggests three precepts. These are that we must abstain from:-

1. killing
2. stealing
3. sexual misconduct

Such evil acts are caused by desire, anger and ignorance. If we wish to live with right action we need to gradually eliminate desire, anger and ignorance from our minds. In order to live in right action we

need also to abstain from lying and intoxicants. These two additions to abstentions for right action are listed in Olcott's (1982) outlines. Living in right action involves extending compassion to all living beings, taking only what is given and living a pure and chaste life. Following these principles promotes harmony and right action within ourselves and others. When the thought is unguarded, the bodily action is also unguarded, so are speech and mental action. When we have wrong bodily behaviour, wrong thought and wrong speech, we become fools whereas, when we have right speech, right bodily behaviour and right thought, we become sages (Piyadassi, 1987).

Our conduct builds our character. The building of character is the fruit of personal exertion. We each have to build it up by thought, reflection, care, effort, mindfulness and concentrated activity. Ultimately, our character is not inherited from our parents, nor created by external advantages, but is the result of our own endeavour. To develop we need to be vigilant and ever mindful. To find right action we need to cultivate love.

How do you get control of your shadow self which may be in more control of your actions, feelings, and thoughts than you may be aware of? Every day, do three things out of love, and with love. The shadow then has become totally transfigured and causes no more disturbance or imbalance. When does that time come? Do not worry, it will come, but unawares. In a time, in a day, in a moment when you have become love and nothing else fills your consciousness. That day comes to all - that is evolution. Do your three things. That makes a good start (Ananda Tara Shan, 1993, p. 104).

1. Let us look at the first precept in Buddha's teachings, which is to abstain from killing and to extend compassion to all beings. This applies to even the smallest creatures that are conscious of being alive, such as ants. The Buddhist acknowledgment of karma is evident here for it is seen that those who kill will suffer themselves and it is seen that those who show compassion and refrain from killing will be reborn into good states of existence. Harmlessness needs to be cultivated. Harmlessness is a major condition in Buddha's teachings.
2. The second precept is to abstain from stealing and to live honestly, taking only what is one's own by right. All kinds of fraud and dishonesty break this precept. Theft may take many forms, even lying. In lying we steal the possibility of living in truth.
3. The third precept is to abstain from wrong sexual behaviour. Buddha suggested the need for self-control and to renunciate sense indulgence. It is important to be aware that the Buddha did not

suggest extremes and His advice to the general population was not abstinence from sex, as it was for the monks. He never compelled his followers to lead the ascetic life against their wishes because of the psychological problems involved with that. He recommended meditation to sublimate and eliminate the pathological conditions that may spring up as a result from abstinence from indulgences of the senses. His warning was not against sex itself but against wrong ways of gratifying the sexual appetite. Buddha taught that the mind plays an important role in the matter of sex.

In Theosophy we understand that right action can only be manifested as we learn the required control of the lower mental body, in order to live lives of harmlessness. As Buddha has shown us, to do this we must learn to control our thoughts and our speech. It takes lifetimes for us to develop harmlessness and to eventually come to know what right action is from the heart. We are taught to stop and think before we act. Remember that we have said that the steps of the Eightfold Path are interwoven and there are other steps that help us come to understand right action. These are obviously right belief, right thought, and right speech; and also, right effort and right meditation can help us to change our actions towards ourselves and others. Right action comes when we ourselves decide to act in better ways. The knowledge of what is right must come from within. Right action involves acting from the heart without attachment to the outcome. For example, when we act from the heart to assist another we do not think about what we will receive in return. We simply do it, act from the heart, with no attachment to what the outcome may be.

Too often we do not reflect enough before taking action so the result turns out to be not what we intended. The process of reflection, thinking arising from meditation, is stressed by Buddha. This he taught Rahula by asking him for what purpose is a mirror.

“Rahula, for what purpose is a mirror?” questioned the Buddha.

“For the purpose of reflecting, Lord.”

“Similarly, Rahula, after reflecting and reflecting should bodily action be done; after reflecting should verbal action be done; after reflecting should mental action be done.

“Whatever action you desire to do with the body, of that particular bodily action you should reflect: ‘Now, this action that I desire to perform with the body - would this, my bodily action, be conducive to my own harm, or to the harm of others, or to that of both myself and others?’ Then, unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain.

“If, when reflecting, you should realise: ‘Now, this bodily action of mine that I am desirous of performing, would be conducive to my own harm or to the harm of others, or to that of both myself and others.’ Then unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain. Such an action with the body, you must on no account perform.

“If, on the other hand, when reflecting you realise: ‘Now, this bodily action that I am desirous of performing, would conduce neither to the harm of myself, nor to that of others, nor to that of both myself and others.’ Then skillful is this bodily action, entailing pleasure and producing happiness. Such bodily action you should perform.”

Exhorting the Samanera Rahula to use reflection during and after one’s actions, the Buddha said:

“While you are doing an action with the body, of that particular action should you reflect: ‘Now, is this action that I am doing with my body conducive to my own harm, or to the harm of others or to that of both myself and others?’ Then unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain.”

“If, when reflecting, you realise: ‘Now, this action that I am doing with my body is conducive to my own harm, to the harm of others, and to that of both myself and others.’ Then unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain. From such a bodily action you must desist.

“If, when reflecting, you should realise: ‘Now, this action of mine that I am doing with the body is conducive neither to my own harm, nor to the harm of others, nor to that of both myself and others.’ Then skillful is this bodily action, entailing pleasure and happiness. Such bodily action you should do again and again.”

The Buddha adds, “If, when reflecting, you should realise: ‘Now, this action that I have done is unskillful,’ such an action should be confessed, revealed, and made manifest to the teacher, or to the learned, or to your brethren of the holy life. Having confessed, you should acquire restraint in the future.”

The admonition with regard to skillful and unskillful verbal and mental actions was treated in the same way.

Stating that constant reflection was essential for purification, the Buddha ended the discourse as follows:

“Thus must you train yourself- by constantly reflecting shall we purify our bodily actions, by constantly reflecting shall we purify our verbal actions, by constantly reflecting shall we purify our mental actions.”

(Narada, p.74)

DHARMA

True vocation comes as an inner call. When one lives one's life according to one's true vocation, one has responded to that call.

Dharma is living according to the soul's purpose in life. It is the fifth step on the Way of Compassion. Buddha called this step right livelihood. Right livelihood considers the morality of living in accordance with our beliefs and taking on a way of living that is not harmful to others or ourselves. There are many wrong ways of earning a living. Buddha spoke of not dealing in arms or lethal weapons, not taking animals for slaughter, not dealing in intoxicants or poison. There are many kinds of work that are harmful to society including arms and nuclear warfare industries, the drink trade, occupations involving slaughter and dissection of animals, dishonest advertising or publicity and many unethical business practices. One of the main points of right livelihood is not to profess one point of morality and earn livelihood with another conflicting morality. For example, if you were a professed vegetarian you would not earn your living by working in the abattoirs. If you profess to be an honest and truthful citizen you would not work for an organisation which was clearly trying to rob money from the poor.

Right livelihood applies to individuals, families and nations and applied to the kings in Buddha's time as much as to their people. Right livelihood suggests that we should try to earn a living by right means. What is earned by unjust and immoral means, by killing, stealing, and cheating, through dishonesty and deceit cannot be regarded as right living. In right livelihood Buddha encourages monk and lay-person alike to live a righteous life, doing one's duty to the best of one's ability and leaving nothing undone. To achieve right livelihood attention must be paid to all of our duties towards those with whom we have relations. This includes all of our reciprocal relationships, parents and children, teachers and pupils, husbands and wives, friends and relatives and coworkers. Life is to be lived free from fraud and hypocrisy. It is important not to delight in worldly favours and honours but instead to cultivate detachment.

Right dharma plays a major part in understanding right livelihood. Buddha has given many discourses on dharma. The teaching He gives that I like the best is the explanation of dharma through the simile of the raft where He helps us to see that dharma is a vehicle through which we can evolve and take our rightful place in the flow of life. I put the teaching here for your contemplation.

Monks, a man sets out on a journey and comes to a vast stretch of water. The near bank is dangerous, the far bank is safe. But no boat goes to the further shore and there is no bridge. He thinks: "Vast indeed is this stretch of water, the near bank is unsafe but the further one is without danger. I had better collect grass, leaves, branches and wood to make a raft and with its aid using my hands and feet ferry myself across to a further shore."

Then monks, that man having made a raft, crosses over safely to the further shore striving with his hands and feet. Having crossed he thinks: "This raft has been very useful, with its aid I have reached the further bank safely: I had better carry it on my head or back and go wherever I want."

What do you think monks? Is he acting rightly about the raft? Suppose that man who has crossed over to the further bank should think: "This raft has been very useful, with its aid I have reached the further bank safely: I had better beach it or (let it) float down the vast stretch of water and go wherever I want." If he acts thus, monks, he would be acting rightly about the raft.

Even so, monks, using the simile of the raft I have taught the dharma designed for crossing over and not for retaining. You monks who understand the dharma taught by using the simile of a raft, have to give up good things; how much more the evil things.

(Thera Piyadassi, 1987, p. 221)

In this example, Buddha shows us the need to be unattached to our dharma, but to simply use it as the vehicle for the purpose it serves and cultivate detachment around it. We need to find a livelihood that allows us to manifest our dharma or soul's purpose in such a way that we keep within the spiritual Laws.

DEDICATION

*To face yourself demands the strongest courage,
the strongest faith, the strongest steadfastness.*

Ananda Tara Shan

Dedication is required if we are to achieve our dharma and become that which we truly are. This is the sixth step which Buddha called right effort. Right effort is about building noble qualities or virtues and rejecting those that are not noble. Practicing right effort we achieve what are known as the ten perfections. These are:-

1. generosity
2. moral integrity
3. renunciation
4. wisdom
5. energy
6. patience
7. honesty
8. determination
9. loving kindness
10. equanimity

Right effort involves finding the right discipline to nurture and develop good virtues within us. For example, if we want to progress mentally we must make the necessary effort to guard our thoughts against negativity and laziness. Right effort involves control of the thoughts and the senses, when we check our negative inclinations and curb our impulses. Controlling our senses doesn't mean that we shut our eyes and ears and deny their existence. Our thirst for fame, power and domination has brought a lot of agony to humanity. If we make no effort to check the longings and yearning of desire we will be ever swayed by our desires and slave to our lower mind. We must be vigilant, alert in controlling negative thoughts and cultivate healthy ones. Effort in Buddhism talks of mental energy and not physical strength. When right effort is cultivated hope is never given up, effort is always made and the student strives courageously. Buddha, in His life, gave examples of this as he strove tirelessly to elevate humanity regardless of the bodily fatigue involved. Right effort brings out the warrior nature. In cultivating right effort the will is put forth to prevent unwholesome thoughts arising. We strive to develop energy to strengthen the mind. Unwholesome thoughts that have already arisen are

abandoned. The will is used to produce and develop wholesome thoughts and to maintain a favourable object of concentration (meditation).

Indifference is a dangerous enemy of right effort and it leads to slackness. To guard against this we need to develop a discipline of mind which is given both time and regular practice. Buddha gave advice that the monks could follow if they were intent on developing higher thoughts. His advice is as follows:-

1. *If through reflection on an object, unwholesome thoughts associated with desire and delusion arise, he should reflect on another object which is wholesome.*
2. *If the thoughts still rise he should consider the disadvantages of the unwholesome thoughts.*
3. *If the negative thoughts still arise he should pay no attention and not reflect on these thoughts.*
4. *If the negative thoughts still arise he should reflect on removing the root of them; and*
5. *If they still arise he should with clenched teeth and tongue pressed against his palate restrain, overcome and control the negative mind with the positive mind. Then we begin to think the thoughts that we want to think. Right effort should be cultivated wherever possible in all our speech, actions and behaviour in our daily life. To do it we need strength of mind, strenuous effort and vigilance.*

(Piyadassi, 1987, p. 173).

It is useful to note here that making the sound of “om”, “aum” or chanting the “om mani padme hum” mantra can help to purify us of negative thoughts. This can be done silently or aloud. It helps our vibration to lift and it calms the lower mind.

In Theosophy right effort is about putting in the appropriate effort and taking the right steps in order that we work to reach our ideal. Through our endeavours we magnify our dedication and slowly begin to manifest our ideals. Right effort is wholehearted dedication.

AWARENESS

A man can become a desert when he will not permit the Spirit of God to enter him. A man can become a beautiful garden of sweet smelling flowers when he permits the Spirit of God to touch him.

Ananda Tara Shan

Being aware of ourselves, within ourselves, of others and the world around us is what Buddha called right mindfulness. It is also about being aware of and attentive to Spirit. In right mindfulness Buddha asks us to cultivate mindfulness for our own and others' protection. Through mindfulness we can cultivate harmlessness, loving kindness and compassion and become conscious of our thoughts, words and acts. It guards against deviating from the righteous and encourages us to do good. It involves training our mind to examine things in such a way as to recognise what is important and not be led astray. We must be mindful with our body, our feelings, and the ideas that arise in our mind. When we pay proper regard to these fundamentals of mindfulness we can move towards enlightenment.

Right mindfulness is to become detached from thoughts of self. We need to apply mindfulness to everything we do, in all our movements, whether we stand, sit, speak, stay silent, eat or drink. Right mindfulness helps us to understand and clearly comprehend. Mindfulness involves paying systematic attention and not drifting into ignorance or thirst for becoming something. It is about remaining aware and staying present.

“Sammāsati” is the Pali word for mindfulness. “Sati” means memory and remembrance. We must apply right memory to the world within and without, always, everywhere during our waking life. Applying right memory is partly about remembering the positive aspects, putting the negative ones out of our mind and not holding on to them. We are mindful to cultivate the goodness. For example, if someone speaks unkindly to us and we keep it in our mind for weeks, months, years it will not do us any good, it will only annoy us. There are some things we must forget and right memory consists in not only remembering the right things but also in putting aside the wrong things. The Lord Buddha possessed the memory of His past incarnations which is evidenced in some of the Jataka stories. It is important when we see our past that we recognise we may not be correct in our interpretations of our memories. We may need the help of others to obtain a correct interpretation. Through this we learn discrimination. We must be mindful to have right memory.

LIBERATION

*Freedom is often misunderstood. True freedom comes from liberation of soul.
This only occurs through dedicated effort and through living by the Spiritual Laws.*

Liberation comes when we have found right meditation and right memory. The last step on the Way of Compassion is liberation. Buddha called this step right concentration/right meditation. It is the practice of meditation which leads to a full understanding of the impermanence of things and eventually to nirvana. Meditation requires discipline and training.

Buddha suggests that we need to work at weeding or removing five hindrances before meditation can really begin. These five hindrances are:-

1. sensuality
2. ill will
3. laziness
4. worry
5. scepticism

Right concentration is unification of the mind or one-pointedness of the mind. Right concentration brings calm and enables us to develop insight or true wisdom, in turn enabling us to see things as they really are: the state of impermanence, the state of suffering and the not-self. Meditation comes to fulfilment as calm and insight work together. When we reach a state of purity of mind, right concentration and right understanding support each other.

When Rahula was eighteen, Buddha gave him several types of meditation,

... develop the meditation on loving kindness, Rahula, for by this ill will is banished; develop the meditation on compassion, Rahula, for by this cruelty is banished; develop the meditation on sympathetic joy, Rahula, for by this aversion is banished; develop the meditation on equality, Rahula, for by this hatred is banished; develop the meditation on purity, Rahula, for by this lust is banished; develop the meditation on the concept of impermanence, Rahula, for by this pride of self is banished and develop the concentration of mindfulness on in-and-out breathing.

(Thera Piyadassi, p.213)

Buddha gave forty subjects of meditation. It is important to select the one that suits us best.

Olcott (1982) tells us, in his outline of the fundamental Buddhist beliefs, that “Right Meditation leads to Spiritual enlightenment, or the development of that Buddha-like faculty which is latent in every man” (p. 131).

Meditation is like the heartbeat of Buddhist teachings. Right meditation and concentration lead to joy:

The monk who has entered a lonely cell, whose mind is calmed and who sees the dharma, the truth, with insight, to him there comes rapturous joy transcending that of men.

(Piyadassi, 1987, p. 218)

Right concentration leads to peace and right meditation leads to an inner joy. Following this section is a silent meditation on the breath written in the Buddhist style. You may wish to try it.

A SILENT MEDITATION ON THE BREATH

Do a few minutes of silent meditation here by practicing concentration on the in and out breathing.

Fix your attention at the point where the breath moves through the nostrils and note how the breath goes in and out but do not follow it.

Do not stop or hold your breath, let it be natural without any force or stress.

At times it may become so fine that you may no longer notice it.

Soon you will notice that you and the breath are not two things, you become One.

Once you have achieved this make the sound “om” either silently, in your inner, or aloud.

You can do this once, three times or several times.

The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path are a great and simple Teaching given by the Buddha to help us and guide us through our lives. They are the essence of living according to Right Human Relations, providing us with practical daily steps that we can follow if we wish to become better people and gradually move towards enlightenment. When we choose to live according to good and exercise

our ability to truly love, seeking truth, harmlessness, justice and liberation of Spirit, we are choosing to live according to the principles of Right Human Relations. When we think of the consequences before we act, give to others in need without counting the cost, speak our truth in the energy of love, bring forth the energy of forgiveness to our lives and relationships with ourselves and others, work towards the purification of all our inner bodies, practically working to better our thoughts, feelings and actions and give our energy, time and effort for the benefit of Christ's work, doing our best to live our dharma, manifest our God-given talents, skills and abilities for the betterment of all around us, we are beginning to embody the seeds of Right Human Relations. When we bring these qualities to group life and effort we begin to sprout the needed roots that will make a solid foundation for humanity's future.

Right Human Relations is achieved through people of every land forming into groups, spreading goodwill. The practice of Right Human Relations will provide an active energy of loving understanding and mobilise a tremendous reaction against hate and antisocial consciousness. It brings the consciousness of unity, not separatism, and allows all who wish it to be lifted to the heart of Maitreya Christ Buddha. "Unite all nations, all people within His Loving Heart."

As mentioned earlier, the Lord Buddha also taught His followers about the coming of His brother, the Lord Maitreya, the Great Compassionate One. The understanding and practice of the steps on the Noble Eightfold Path pave the way into the Aquarian Age, the Age of Maitreya, the Age of the Heart. By applying the principles of loving kindheartedness and compassion, and applying the steps given to us in our lives in a practical way, we can begin to prepare for Maitreya's coming.

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TARAJYOTI GOVINDA
(1958-1999)

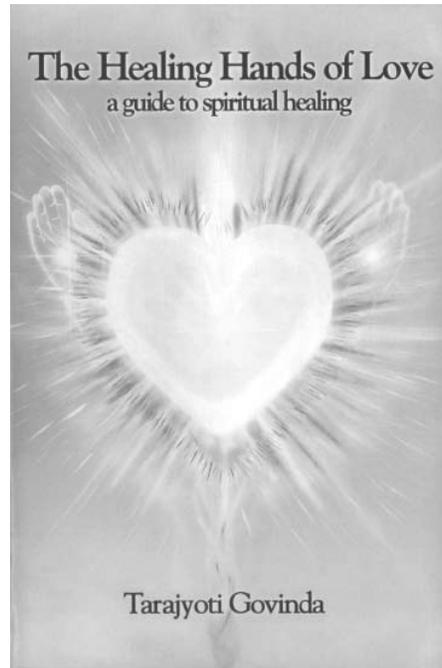
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After a spiritual awakening and death experience in 1983, Tara began working as a spiritual healer, counsellor, teacher and group facilitator. She became a psychologist whose major focus was the synthesis of spiritual and psychological transformation. Tarajyoti was the founder and director of The Transformational College of Education and co-founder and director of The Theosophical School of Healing.

Her main interests were Theosophy (the study of Divine Wisdom); Jungian psychology; music; native spirituality; being in nature; painting and other creative endeavours.

Tarajyoti ascended 5 April 1999 after many years of devoted work.

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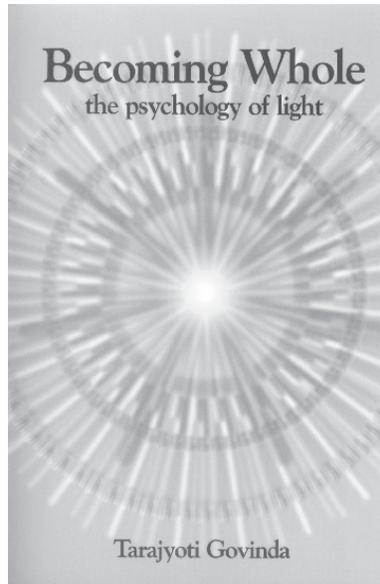
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Deva Wings exists as a portal for spiritual understanding, coming into being on Right Human Relations day in 1994.

Our purpose and objectives are:

1. to spread the Light through understanding of Spirit, making the teachings of Theosophy (Divine Wisdom) comprehensible to all.
2. to offer education in Theosophical principles.
3. to offer education in Spiritual Psychology so that we may come to understand ourselves and become that which we truly are.

Deva is a Sanskrit word meaning shining one or angel. The concept is such that the Light and teachings of Spirit will spread over the Earth on the devas' wings.

We offer these materials in love and joy and in the hope that they serve you well.