THE TRAINING OF THE MIND

THE Religion of the Buddhas is, in the most eminent sense of the word, a Practical Philosophy. It is not a collection of dogmas which are to be accepted and believed with an unquestioning and unintelligent faith : but a series of statements and propositions which, in the first place, are to be intellectually grasped and comprehended ; in the second, to be applied to every action of our daily lives, to be practised, to be lived, up to the fullest extent of our powers. This fact of the essentially practical nature of our Religion is again and again insisted upon in the Holy Books. Though one man should know by heart a thousand stanzas of the Law, and not practise it, he has not understood the Dhamma. That man who knows and *practises* one stanza of the Law, he has understood the Dhamma, he is the true follower of the Buddha. It is the practice of the Dhamma that constitutes the true Buddhist, not the mere knowledge of its tenets ; it is the carrying out of the Five Precepts, and not their repetition in the Pali tongue ; it is the bringing home into our daily lives of the Great Laws of Love and Righteousness that marks a man as *Sammaditthi* ; and not the mere appreciation of the truth of that Dhamma as a beautiful and poetic statement of Laws which are too hard to follow. This Dhamma has to be lived, to be

acted up to, to be felt as the supreme idol in our hearts, as the supreme motive of our lives; and he who does this to the best of his ability is the right follower of the Master;—not he who calls himself "Buddhist," but whose life is empty of the love the Buddha taught.

And because our lives are very painful, because to follow the Good Law in all our ways is very difficult, therefore we should not despair of ever being able to walk in the way we have learned, and resign ourselves to living a life full only of worldly desires and ways. For has not the Master said, "Let no man think lightly of good, saying 'it will not come nigh me'—for even by the falling of drops, the water-jar is filled. The wise man becomes full of Good, even if he gather it little by little"? He who does his best, he who strives, albeit failingly, to follow what is good, to eschew what is evil, that man will grow daily the more powerful for his striving; and every wrong desire overcome, each loving and good impulse acted up to, will mightily increase our power to resist evil, will ever magnify our power of living the life that is right.

Now, the whole of this practice of Buddhism, the whole of the Good Law which we who call ourselves "Buddhists" should strive to follow, has been summed up by the Tathagata in one single stanza:—

"Avoiding the performance of evil actions, gaining merit by the performance of good acts: and the purification of all our thoughts;—this is the Teaching of all the Buddhas."

Therefore we that call ourselves Buddhists have so to live that we may carry out the three rules here laid down. We all know what it is to avoid doing evil;—we detail the acts

that are ill each time we take *Panca Sila.* The taking of life, the taking of what does not rightly belong to us, living a life of impurity, speaking what is not true, or what is cruel and unkind, and indulging in drugs and drinks that undermine the mental and moral faculties—these are the evil actions that we must avoid. Living in peace and love, returning good for evil, having reverence and patience and humility—these are some part of what we know to be good. And so we can all understand, can all try to live up to, the first two clauses of this stanza; we can all endeavour to put them into practice in our daily lives. But the way to purify the thought, the way to cultivate the thoughts that are good, to suppress and overcome the thoughts that are evil, the practices by which the mind is to be trained and cultivated; of these things less is known; they are less practised, and less understood.

And so the object of this paper is to set forth what is written in the books of these methods of cultivating and purifying the mind;—to set forth how this third rule can be followed and lived up to; for in one way it is the most important of all, it really includes the other two rules, and is their crown and fruition. The avoidance of evil, the performance of good: these things will but increase the merits of our destinies, will lead but to new lives, happier, and so more full of temptation, than that we now enjoy. And after that merit, thus gained, is spent and gone, the whirling of the great Wheel of Life will bring us again to evil, and unhappy lives;—for not by the mere storing of merit can freedom be attained, it is not by mere merit that we can come to the Great Peace. This merit-gaining is secondary in importance to the purification and culture of our thought, but it is essential, because only by

the practice of *Sila* comes the power of Mental Concentration that makes us free.*

In order that we may understand how this final and principal aim of our Buddhist Faith is to be attained, before we can see why particular practices should thus purify the mind, it is necessary that we should first comprehend the nature of this mind itself—this thought that we seek to purify and to liberate.

In the marvellous system of psychology which has been declared to us by our Teacher, the *Citta* or thought-stuff is shewn to consist of innumerable elements which are called *Dhamma* or *Sankhára*. If we translate *Dhamma* or *Sankhára* as used in this context as "Tendencies," we shall probably come nearest to the English meaning of the word. When a given act has been performed a number of times; when a given thought has arisen in our minds a number of times, there is a definite tendency to the repetition of that act; a definite tendency to the recurrence of that thought. Thus each mental Dhamma, each Sankhára, tends to produce constantly its like, and be in turn reproduced; and so at first sight it would seem as though there were no possibility of altering the total composition of one's Sankháras, no possibility of suppressing the evil Dhammas, no possibility of augmenting the states that are good. But, whilst our Master has taught us of this tendency to reproduce that is so characteristic of all mental states, he has also shewn us how this reproductive energy of the Sankháras may itself be employed to the suppression of evil states, and to the culture

* Sila must then be defined as the discipline essential to Mental Concentration, and this will vary with Race, Climate, Individuality, etc. etc.—A. C.

of the states that are good. For if a man has many and powerful Sankháras in his nature, which tend to make him angry or cruel, we are taught that he can definitely overcome those evil Sankháras by the practice of mental concentration on Sankháras of an opposite nature;—in practice by devoting a definite time each day to meditating on thoughts of pity and of love. Thus he increases the Sankháras in his mind that tend to make men loving and pitiful, and because "Hatred ceaseth not by hatred at any time, hatred ceaseth by Love alone," therefore do those evil Sankháras of his nature, those tendencies to anger and to cruelty, disappear before the rise of new good tendencies of love and of pity, even as the darkness of the night fades in the glory of the dawn. Thus we see that one way—and the best way—of overcoming bad Sankháras is the systematic cultivation, by dint of meditation, of such qualities as are opposed to the evil tendencies we desire to eliminate; and in the central and practical feature of the instance adduced, the practice of definite meditation or mental concentration upon the good Sankháras, we have the key to the entire system of the Purification and Culture of the mind, which constitutes the practical working basis of the Buddhist Religion.

If we consider the action of a great and complex engine—such a machine as drives a steamship through the water—we will see that there is, first and foremost, one central and all-operating source of energy; in this case the steam which is generated in the boilers. This energy in itself is neither good nor bad—it is simply *Power*; and whether that power does the useful work of moving the ship, or the bad work of breaking loose, and destroying and spoiling the ship, and

scalding men to death, and so on; all depends upon the correct and co-ordinated operation of all the various parts of that complex machinery. If the slide-valves of the great cylinders open a little too soon and so admit the steam before the proper time, much power will be lost in overcoming the resistance of the steam itself. If they remain open too long, the expansive force of the steam will be wasted, and so again power will be lost; and if they open too late, much of the momentum of the engine will be used up in moving uselessly the great mass of the machinery. And so it is with every part of the engine. In every part of the prime mover is that concentrated expansive energy of the steam; but that energy must be applied in each diverse piece of mechanism in exactly the right way, at exactly the right time; otherwise, either the machine will not work at all, or much of the energy of the steam will be wasted in overcoming its own opposing force.

So it is with this subtle machinery of the mind,—a mechanism infinitely more complex, capable of far more power for good or for evil, than the most marvellous of man's mechanical achievements, than the most powerful engine ever made by human hands. One great engine, at its worst, exploding, may destroy a few hundred lives; at its best may carry a few thousand men, may promote trade, and the comfort of some few hundred lives; but who can estimate the power of one human mind, whether for good or for evil? One such mind, the mind of a man like Jesus Christ, may bring about the tortured death of many million men, may wreck states and religions and dynasties, and cause untold misery and suffering; another mind, employing the same manner of energy, but rightly using that energy for the

benefit of others, may, like the Buddha, bring hope into the hopeless lives of crores upon crores of human beings, may increase by a thousandfold the pity and love of a third of humanity, may aid innumerable lakhs of beings to come to that Peace for which we all crave—that Peace the way to which is so difficult to find.

But the energy which these two minds employed is one and the same. That energy lies hidden in every human brain, it is generated with every pulsation of every human heart, it is the prerogative of every being, and the sole mover in the world of men. There is no idea or thought, there is no deed, whether good or bad, accomplished in this world, but that supreme energy, that steam-power of our mental mechanism, is the mover and the cause. It is by use of this energy that the child learns how to speak; it is by its power that Christ could bring sorrow into thousands of lives; it is by this power that the Buddha conquered the hearts of one-third of men; it is by that force that so many have followed him on the way which he declared—the Nirvàna Marga, the way to the Unutterable Peace. The name of that power is Mental Concentration, and there is nothing in this world, whether for good or for evil, but is wrought by its application. It weaves upon the loom of Time the fabric of men's characters and destinies. Name and Form are the twin threads with which it blends the quick-flying shuttles of that Loom, men's good and evil thoughts and deeds; and the pattern of that fabric is the outcome of innumerable lives.

It is by the power of this Samadhi that the baby learns to walk, it is by its power that Newton weighed these suns

and worlds. It is the steam power of this human organism, and what it does to make us great or little, good or bad, is the result of the way in which the powers of the mind, all these complex Sankháras, apply and use that energy. If the Sankháras act well together, if their varying functions are well co-ordinated, then that man has great power, either for good or for evil; and when you see one of weak mind and will, you may be sure that his Sankháras are working one against another; and so the central power, this power of Samadhi, is wasted in one part of the mind in overcoming its own energy in another.

If a skilful engineer, knowing well the functions of each separate part of an engine, were to have to deal with a machine whose parts did not work in unison, and which thus frittered away the energy supplied to it, he would take his engine part by part, adjusting here a valve and there an eccentric; he would observe the effect of his alterations with every subsequent movement of the whole engine, and so, little by little, would set all that machinery to work together, till the engine was using to the full the energy supplied to it. And this is what we have to do with this mechanism of our minds—each one for himself. First, earnestly to investigate our component Sankháras, to see wherein we are lacking, to see wherein our mental energy is well used and where it runs to waste; and then to keep adjusting, little by little, all these working parts of our mind-engine, till each is brought to work in the way that is desired, till the whole vast complex machinery of our being is all working to one end,—the end for which we are working, the goal which now lies so far away,

yet not so far but that we may yet work for and attain it.

But how are we thus to adjust and to alter the Sankháras of our natures? If a part of our mental machinery *will* use up our energy wrongly, *will* let our energy leak into wrong channels, how are we to cure it? Let us take another example from the world of mechanics. There is a certain part of a locomotive which is called the slide-valve. It is a most important part, because its duty is to admit the steam to the working parts of the engine: and upon its accurate performance of this work the whole efficiency of the locomotive depends. The great difficulty with this slide-valve consists in the fact that its face must be perfectly, almost mathematically, smooth; and no machine has yet been devised that can cut this valve-face smooth enough. So what they do is this: they make use of the very force of the steam itself, the very violent action of steam, to plane down that valve-face to the necessary smoothness. The valve, made as smooth as machinery can make it, is put in its place, and steam is admitted; so that the valve is made to work under very great pressure, and very quickly for a time. As it races backwards and forwards, under this unusually heavy pressure of steam, the mere friction against the port-face of the cylinder upon which it moves suffices to wear down the little unevennesses that would otherwise have proved so fertile a source of leakage. So we must do with our minds. We must take our good and useful Sankháras one by one, and put them under extra and unusual pressure by special mental concentration. And by this means those good Sankháras will be made ten times as

efficient; there will be no more leakage of energy; and our mental mechanism will daily work more and more harmoniously and powerfully. From the moment that the Mental Reflex * is attained, the hindrances (*i.e.*, the action of opposing Sankháras) are checked, the leakages (Asavas, a word commonly translated corruptions, means literally leakages,—*i.e.*, leakages through wrong channels of the energy of the being) are assuaged, and the mind concentrates itself by the concentration of the neighbourhood degree.†

Now let us see how these Sankháras, these working parts of our mental mechanism, first come into being. Look at a child learning how to talk. The child hears a sound, and this sound the child learns to connect by association with a definite idea. By the power of its mental concentration the child seizes on that sound, by its imitative group of Sankháras it repeats that sound, and by another effort of concentration it impresses the idea of that sound on some cortical cell of its brain, where it remains as a faint Sankhára, ready to be called up when required. Then, one time, occasion arises which recalls the idea that sound represents—it has need to make that sound in order to get some desired object. The child concentrates its mind with all its power on the memorising cortex of its brain, until that faint Sankhára, that manner of mind-echo of the sound that lurks in the little brain-cell is discovered, and, like a stretched string played upon by the wind, the cell yields up to the mind

* The Mental Reflex or Nimitta, is the result of the practice of certain forms of Samadhi. For a detailed account see Visuddhi Magga.

† Visuddhi Magga, iv. There are two degrees of mental concentration, termed "Neighbourhood-concentration" and "Attainment-concentration" respectively.

a faint repetition of the sound-idea which caused it. By another effort of concentration, now removed from the memorising area and shifted to the speaking centre in the brain, the child's vocal chords tighten in the particular way requisite to the production of that sound; the muscles of lips and throat and tongue perform the necessary movements; the breathing apparatus is controlled, so that just the right quantity of air passes over the vocal chords; and as the child speaks it repeats the word it had formerly learnt to associate with the object of its present desire. Such is the process of the formation of a Sankhára. The more frequently that idea recurs to the child, the more often does it have to go through the processes involved—the more often, in a word, has the mind of the child to perform mental concentration, or Samadhi, upon that particular series of mental and muscular movements, the more powerful does the set of Sankháras involved become, till the child will recall the necessary sound-idea, will go through all those complex movements of the organs of speech, without any appreciable new effort of mental concentration;—in effect, that chain of associations, that particular co-ordained functioning of memory and speech, will have established itself by virtue of the past mental concentrations as a powerful Sankhára in the being of the child, and that Sankhára will tend to recur whenever the needs which led to the original Samadhi are present, so that the words will be reproduced automatically, and without fresh special effort.

Thus we see that Sankháras arise from any act of mental concentration. The more powerful, or the more often repeated, is the act of Samadhi, the more powerful the

Sankháras produced; thus a word in a new language, for instance, may become a Sankhára, may be perfectly remembered without further effort, either by one very considerable effort of mental concentration, or by many repetitions of the word, with slight mental concentration.

The practical methods, then, for the culture and purification of the mind, according to the method indicated for us by our Master, are two;—first, *Sammásati*, which is the accurate reflection upon things in order to ascertain their nature—an investigation or analysis of the Dhammas of our own nature in this case; and, secondly, *Sammásamádhi*, or the bringing to bear upon the mind of the powers of concentration, to the end that the good states, the good Dhammas, may become powerful Sankháras in our being. As to the bad states, they are to be regarded as mere leakages of the central power; and the remedy for them, as for the leaky locomotive slide-valve, is the powerful practice upon the good states which are of an opposite nature. So we have first very accurately to analyse and observe the states that are present in us by the power of Sammásati, and then practise concentration upon the good states, especially those that tend to overcome our particular failings. By mental concentration is meant an intentness of the thoughts, the thinking for a definite time of only one thought at a time. This will be found at first to be very difficult. You sit down to meditate on love, for instance; and in half a minute or so you find you are thinking about what someone said the day before yesterday. So it always is at first. The Buddha likened the mind of the man who was beginning this practice of Samadhi to a calf which had been used to running hither and thither in the fields,

without any let or hindrance, which has now been tied with a rope to a post. The rope is the practice of meditation; the post is the particular subject selected for meditation. At first the calf tries to break loose, he runs hither and thither in every direction; but is always brought up sharp at a certain distance from the post, by the rope to which he is tied. For a long time, if he is a restless calf, this process goes on; but at last the calf becomes more calm, he sees the futility of struggling, and lies down by the side of the post. So it is with the mind. At first, subjected to this discipline of concentration, the mind tries to break away, it runs in this or that direction; and if it is an average restless mind, it takes a long time to realise the uselessness of trying to break away. But always, having gone a certain distance from the post, having got a certain distance from the object selected for meditation, the fact that you have sat down with the definite object of meditating acts as the rope, and the mind realises that the post was its object, and so comes back to it. When the mind, becoming concentrated and steady, at last lies down by the post, and no longer tries to break away from the object of meditation, then concentration is obtained. But this takes a long time to attain, and very hard practice; and in order that we may make this, the most trying part of the practice, easier, various methods are suggested. One is, that we can avail ourselves of the action of certain Sankháras themselves. You know how we get into *habits* of doing things, particularly habits of doing things at a definite time of day. Thus we get into the habit of waking up at a definite time of the morning, and we always tend to wake up at that same hour of the day. We

get into a habit of eating our dinner at seven o'clock, and we do not feel hungry till about that time; and if we change the times of our meals, at first we always feel hungry at seven, then, when we get no dinner, a little after seven that hunger vanishes, and we presently get used to the new state of things. In effect the practice of any act, the persistence of any given set of ideas, regularly occurring at a set time of the day, forms within us a very powerful tendency to the recurrence of those ideas, or to the practice of that act, at the same time every day.

Now we can make use of this time-habit of the mind to assist us in our practice of meditation. Choose a given time of day; always practise in that same time, even if it is only for ten minutes, but always at exactly the same time of day. In a little while the mind will have established a habit in this respect, and you will find it much easier to concentrate the mind at your usual time than at any other. We should also consider the effect of our bodily actions on the mind. When we have just eaten a meal, the major part of the spare energy in us goes to assist in the work of digestion; so at those times the mind is sleepy and sluggish, and under these circumstances we cannot use all our energies to concentrate with. So choose a time when the stomach is empty—of course the best time from this point of view is when we wake up in the morning. Another thing that you will find very upsetting to your concentration at first is sound—any sudden, unexpected sound particularly. So it is best to choose your time when people are not moving about—when there is as little noise as possible. Here again the early morning is indicated, or else late at night, and, generally speaking, you

will find it easiest to concentrate either just after rising, or else at night, just before going to sleep.

Another thing very much affects these Sankháras, and that is *place*. If you think a little, you will see how tremendously place affects the mind. The merchant's mind may be full of trouble; but no sooner does he get to his office or place of business, than his trouble goes, and he is all alert —a keen, capable business-man. The doctor may be utterly tired out, and half asleep when he is called up at night to attend an urgent case; but no sooner is he come to his place, the place where he is wont to exercise his profession, the bed-side of his patient, than the powerful associations of the place overcome his weariness and mental torpor, and he is very wide awake—all his faculties on the alert, his mind working to the full limits demanded by his very difficult profession. So it is in all things: the merchant at his desk, the captain on the bridge of his ship, the engineer in his engine-room, the chemist in his laboratory—the effect of *place* upon the mind is always to awaken a particular set of Sankháras, the Sankháras associated in the mind with place. Also there is perhaps a certain intangible yet operative atmosphere of thought which clings to places in which definite acts have been done, definite thoughts constantly repeated. It is for this reason that we have a great sense of quiet and peace when we go to a monastery. The monastery is a place where life is protected, where men think deeply of the great mysteries of Life and Death; it is the home of those who are devoted to the practice of this meditation, it is the centre of the religious life of the people. When the people want to make merry, they have *pwes* and things in their own houses,

in the village; but when they feel religiously inclined, then they go to their monastery. So the great bulk of the thoughts which arise in a monastery are peaceful, and calm, and holy; and this atmosphere of peace and calm and holiness seems to penetrate and suffuse the whole place, till the walls and roof and flooring—nay, more, the very ground of the sacred enclosure—seem soaked with this atmosphere of holiness, like some faint distant perfume that can hardly be scented, and yet that one can feel. It may be that some impalpable yet grosser portion of the thought-stuff thus clings to the very walls of a place: we cannot tell, but certain it is that if you blindfold a sensitive man and take him to a temple, he will tell you that it is a peaceful and holy place; whilst if you take him to the shambles, he will feel uncomfortable or fearful.

And so we should choose for our practice of meditation a place which is suited to the work we have to do. It is a great aid, of course, owing to the very specialised set of place Sankháras so obtained, if we can have a special place in which nothing but these practices are done, and where no one but oneself goes; but, for a layman especially, this is very difficult to secure. Instructions are given on this point in *Visuddhi Magga* how the priest who is practising *Kammatthana* is to select some place a little way from the monastery, where people do not come and walk about—either a cave, or else he is to make or get made a little hut, which he alone uses. But as this perfect retirement is not easy to a layman, he must choose whatever place is most suitable—some place where, at the time of his practice, he will be as little disturbed as possible, and, if he is able, this place should not be the place where he sleeps, as the Sankháras of such a place would tend,

so soon as he tried to reduce the number of his thoughts down to one, to make him go to sleep, which is one of the chief things to be guarded against.

Time and place being once chosen, it is important, until the faculty of concentration is strongly established, not to alter them. Then bodily posture is to be considered. If we stand up to meditate, then a good deal of energy goes to maintain the standing posture. Lying down is also not good, because it is associated in our minds with going to sleep. Therefore the sitting posture is best. If you can sit cross-legged, as Buddharupas sit, that is best; because this position has many good Sankháras associated with it in the minds of Buddhist people.

Now comes the all-important question of what we are to meditate upon. The subjects of meditation are classified in the books under forty heads; and in the old days a man wishing to practise *Kammatthana* would go to some great man who had practised long, and had so attained to great spiritual knowledge, and by virtue of his spiritual knowledge that Arahat could tell which of the forty categories would best suit the aspirant. Now-a-days this is hardly possible, as so few practise this Kammatthana; and so it is next to impossible to find anyone with this spiritual insight. So the best thing to do will be to practise those forms of meditation which will most certainly increase the highest qualities in us, the qualities of Love, and Pity, and Sympathy, and Indifference to worldly life and cares; those forms of Sammásati which will give us an accurate perception of our own nature, and the Sorrow, Transitoriness, and Soullessness of all things in the Samsara Cakka; and those forms which

will best calm our minds by making us think of holy and beautiful things, such as the Life of the Buddha, the liberating nature of the Dhamma He taught, and the pure life which is followed by His Bhikkhus.

We have seen how a powerful Sankhára is to be formed in one of two ways: either by one tremendous effort of concentration, or by many slight ones. As it is difficult for a beginner to make a tremendous effort, it will be found simplest to take one idea which can be expressed in a few words, and repeat those words silently over and over again. The reason for the use of a formula of words is that, owing to the complexity of the brain-actions involved in the production of words, very powerful Sankháras are formed by this habit of silent repetition: the words serve as a very powerful mechanical aid in constantly evoking the idea they represent. In order to keep count of the number of times the formula has been repeated, Buddhist people use a rosary of a hundred and eight beads, and this will be found a very convenient aid. Thus one formulates to oneself the ideal of the Great Teacher: one reflects upon His Love and Compassion, on all that great life of His devoted to the spiritual assistance of all beings; one formulates in the mind the image of the Master, trying to imagine Him as He taught that Dhamma which has brought liberation to so many; and every time the mental image fades, one murmurs "Buddhanussati"—"he reflects upon the Buddha"—each time of repetition passing over one of the beads of the rosary. And so with the Dhamma, and the Sangha;—whichever one prefers to reflect upon.

But perhaps the best of all the various meditations upon the ideal, are what is known as the Four Sublime States—

Cattro Brahmavihara. These meditations calm and concentrate the Citta in a very powerful and effective way; and besides this they tend to increase in us those very qualities of the mind which are the best. One sits down facing East, preferably; and after reflecting on the virtues of the Tri Ratna, as set forth in the formulas, "Iti pi so Bhagava," etc., one concentrates one's thought upon ideas of Love; one imagines a ray of Love going out from one's heart, and embracing all beings in the Eastern Quarter of the World, and one repeats this formula: "And he lets his mind pervade the Eastern Quarter of the World with thoughts of Love—with Heart of Love grown great, and mighty, and beyond all measure—till there is not one being in all the Eastern Quarter of the world whom he has passed over, whom he has not suffused with thoughts of Love, with Heart of Love grown great, and mighty, and far-reaching beyond all measure." And as you say these words you imagine your Love going forth to the East, like a great spreading ray of light; and first you think of all your friends, those whom you love, and suffuse them with your thoughts of love; and then you reflect upon all those innumerable beings in that Eastern Quarter whom you know not, to whom you are indifferent, but whom you should love, and you suffuse them also with the ray of your Love; and lastly you reflect upon all those who are opposed to you, who are your enemies, who have done you wrongs, and these too, by an effort of will you suffuse with your Love "till there is not one being in all that Eastern Quarter of the Earth whom you have passed over, whom you have not suffused with thoughts of Love with Heart of Love grown great, and mighty, and beyond all measure." And then you imagine a similar

ray of Love issuing from your heart in the direction of your right hand; and you mentally repeat the same formula, substituting the word "Southern" for "Eastern," and you go through the same series of reflections in that direction. And so to the West, and so to the North, till all around you, in the four directions, you have penetrated all beings with these thoughts of Love. And then you imagine your thought as striking downwards, and embracing and including all beings beneath you, repeating the same formula, and lastly as going upwards, and suffusing with the warmth of your Love all beings in the worlds above. Thus you will have meditated upon all beings with thoughts of Love, in all the six directions of space: and you have finished the Meditation on Love.

In the same way, using the same formula, do you proceed with the other three Sublime States. Thinking of all beings who are involved in the Samsara Cakka, involved in the endless sorrow of existence—thinking especially of those in whom at this moment sorrow is especially manifested, thinking of the weak, the unhappy, the sick, and those who are fallen; you send out a ray of Pity and Compassion towards them in all six directions of Space. And so suffusing all beings with thoughts of Compassion, you pass on to the meditation on Happiness. You meditate on all beings who are happy, from the lowest happiness of earthly love to the highest, the Happiness of those who are freed from all sin, the unutterable Happiness of those who have attained the Nirvàna Dhamma. You seek to feel with all those happy ones in their happiness, to enter into the bliss of their hearts and lives, and to augment it; and so you pervade all six directions with thoughts of

happiness, with this feeling of sympathy with all that is happy and fair and good.

Then, finally, reflecting on all that is evil and cruel and bad in the world, reflecting on the things which tempt men away from the holy life, you assume to all evil beings thoughts of indifference—understanding that all the evil in those beings arises from ignorance; from the Asavas, the leakages of mental power into wrong channels; you understand concerning them that it is not your duty to condemn, or revile, but only to be indifferent to them, and when you have finished this meditation on Indifference, you have completed the meditation on the Four Sublime States—on Love, and Pity, and Happiness, and Indifference. The meditation on Love will overcome in you all hatred and wrath; the meditation on Pity will overcome your Sankháras of cruelty and unkindness; the meditation on Happiness will do away with all feelings of envy and malice; and the meditation on Indifference will take from you all sympathy with evil ways and thoughts. And if you diligently practise these four Sublime States, you will find yourself becoming daily more and more loving and pitiful, and happy with the highest happiness, and indifferent to personal misfortune and to evil. So very powerful is this method of meditation, that a very short practice will give results—results that you will find working in your life and thoughts, bringing peace and happiness to you, and to all around you.

Then there is the very important work of Sammásati, the analysis of the nature of things that leads men to realise how all in the Samsara Cakka is characterised by the three characteristics of Sorrow, and Transitoriness, and Soullessness: how

there is nought that is free from these three characteristics; and how only right reflection and right meditation can free you from them, and can open for you the way to peace. And because men are very much involved in the affairs of the world, because so much of our lives is made of our little hates and loves and fears; because we think so much of our wealth, and those we love with earthly love, and of our enemies, and of all the little concerns of our daily life, therefore is this right perception very difficult to come by, very difficult to realise as absolute truth in the depth of our hearts. We think we have but one life and one body; so these we guard with very great attention and care, wasting useful mental energy upon these ephemeral things. We think we have but one state in life; and so we think very much of how to better our positions, how to increase our fortune.

"I have these sons, mine is this wealth"—thus the foolish man is thinking: "he himself hath not a self, how sons, how wealth?" But if we could look back over the vast stairway of our innumerable lives, if we could see how formerly we had held all various positions, had had countless fortunes, countless children, innumerable loves and wives; if we could so look back, and see the constant and inevitable misery of all those lives, could understand our ever-changing minds and wills, and the whole mighty phantasmagoria of the illusion that we deem so real; if we could do this, then indeed we might realise the utter misery and futility of all this earthly life, might understand and grasp those three characteristics of all existent things; then indeed would our desire to escape from this perpetual round of sorrow be augmented, augmented so that we would work with all our power unto liberation.

To the gaining of this knowledge of past births there is a way, a practice of meditation by which that knowledge may be obtained. This at first may seem startling; but there is nothing really unnatural or miraculous about it: it is simply a method of most perfectly cultivating the memory. Now, memory is primarily a function of the material brain: we remember things because they are stored up like little mind-pictures, in the minute nerve-cells of the grey cortex of the brain, principally on the left frontal lobe. So it may naturally be asked: "If memory, as is certainly the case, be stored up in the material brain, how is it possible that we should remember, without some miraculous faculty, things that happened before that brain existed?" The answer is this: our brains, it is true, have not existed before this birth, and so all our normal memories are memories of things that have happened in this life. But what is the *cause* of the particular brain-structure that now characterises us? Past Sankháras. The particular and specific nature of a given brain; that, namely, which differentiates one brain from another, which makes one child capable of learning one thing and another child another; the great difference of aptitude, and so on, which gives to each one of us a different set of desires, capacities, and thoughts. What force has caused this great difference between brain and brain? We say that the action of our past Sankháras, the whole course of the Sankháras of our past lives, determined, ere our birth in this life, whilst yet the brain was in process of formation, these specific and characteristic features. And if the higher thinking levels of our brains have thus been specialised by the acquired tendencies of all our line of lives,

then every thought that we have had, every idea and wish that has gone to help to specialise that thinking stuff, must have left its record stamped ineffaceably, though faintly, on the structure of this present brain, till that marvellous structure is like some ancient palimpsest—a piece of paper on which, as old writing faded out, another and yet another written screen has been superimposed. By our purblind eyes only the last record can be read, but there are ways by which all those ancient faded writings can be made to appear; and this is how it is done. To read those faded writings we use an eye whose sensitivity to minute shades of colour and texture is far greater than our own; a photograph is taken of the paper, on plates prepared so as to be specially sensitive to minute shades of colour, and, according to the exposure given, the time the eye of the camera gazed upon that sheet of paper, another and another writing is impressed upon the sensitive plate used, and the sheet of paper, which to the untrained eye of man bears but one script, yields up to successive plates those lost, ancient, faded writings, till all are made clear and legible.

So it must be, if we think, with this memory of man; with all the multiple attributes of that infinitely complex brain-structure.

All that the normal mental vision of man can read there is the last plain writing, the record of this present life. But every record of each thought and act of all our karmic ancestry, the records upon whose model this later life, this specialised brain-structure, has been built, must lie there, visible to the trained vision; so that, had we but this more sensitive mental vision, that wondrous palimpsest, the tale of the innumerable

ages that have gone to the composing of that marvellous document, the record of a brain, would stand forth clear and separate, like the various pictures on the colour-sensitive plates. Often, indeed, it happens that one, perchance the last of all those ancient records, is given now so clearly and legibly that a child can read some part of what was written; and so we have those strange instances of sporadic, uninherited genius that are the puzzle and the despair of Western Psychologists? A little child, before he can hardly walk, before he can clearly talk, will see a piano, and crawl to it, and, untaught, his baby fingers will begin to play; and, in a few years' time, with a very little teaching and practice, that child will be able to execute the most difficult pieces—pieces of music which baffle any but the most expert players. There have been many such children whose powers have been exhibited over the length and breadth of Europe. There was Smeaton, again, one of our greatest engineers. When a child (he was the son of uneducated peasant people) he would build baby bridges over the streams in his country—untaught—and his bridges would bear men and cattle. There was a child, some ten years ago, in Japan, who, when a baby, saw one day the ink and brush with which the Chinese and Japanese write, and, crawling with pleasure, reached out his chubby hand for them, and began to write. By the time he was five years old that baby, scarce able to speak correctly, could write in the Chinese character perfectly—that wonderful and complex script that takes an ordinary man ten to fifteen years to master—and this baby of five wrote it perfectly. This child's power was exhibited all over the country, and before the Emperor of Japan; and the question that arises is, how did all these children get their powers? Surely, because

for them the last writing on the book of their minds was yet clear and legible; because in their last birth that one particular set of Sankháras was so powerful that its record could still be read.

And thus we all have, here in our present brains, the faded records of all our interminable series of lives; a thousand, tens of thousands, crores upon crores of records, one superimposed over another, waiting only for the eye that can see, the eye of the trained and perfected memory to read them, to distinguish one from another as the photographic plate distinguished, and the way so to train that mental vision is as follows:—

You sit down in your place of meditation, and you think of yourself seated there. Then you begin to *think backwards.* You think the act of coming into the room. You think the act of walking towards the room, and so you go on, thinking backwards on all the acts that you have done that day. You then come to yourself, waking up in the morning, and perhaps you remember a few dreams, and then there is a blank, and you remember your last thoughts as you went to sleep the night before, what you did before retiring, and so on, back to the time of your last meditation.

This is a very difficult practice; and so at first you must not attempt to go beyond one day: else you will not do it well, and will omit remembering a lot of important things. When you have practised for a little, you will find your memory of events becoming rapidly more and more perfect; and this practice will help you in worldly life as well, for it vastly increases the power of memory in general. When doing a day becomes easy, then slowly increase the time meditated upon.

Get into the way of doing a week at a sitting—here taking only the more important events—then a month, then a year, and so on. You will find yourself remembering all sorts of things about your past life that you had quite forgotten; you will find yourself penetrating further and further into the period of deep sleep; you will find that you remember your dreams even far more accurately than you ever did before. And so you go on, going again and again over long periods of your life, and each time you will remember more and more of things you had forgotten. You will remember little incidents of your child-life, remember the tears you shed over the difficult tasks of learning how to walk and speak: and at last, after long and hard practice, you will remember a little, right back to the time of your birth.

If you never get any further than this, you will have done yourself an enormous deal of good by this practice. You will have marvellously increased your memory in every respect; and you will have gained a very clear perception of the changing nature of your desires and mind and will, even in the few years of this life. But to get beyond this point of birth is very difficult, because, you see, you are no longer reading the relatively clear record of this life, but are trying to read one of those fainter, underwritten records the Sankháras have left on your brain. All this practice has been with the purpose of making clear your mental vision; and, as I have said, this will without doubt be clearer far than before; but the question is, whether it is clear enough. Time after time retracing in their order the more important events of this life, at last, one day, you will bridge over that dark space between death and birth, when all the Sankháras are, like the seed in the earth,

breaking up to build up a new life; and one day you will suddenly find yourself remembering your death *in your last life*. This will be very painful, but it is important to get to that stage several times, because at the moment when a man comes very near to death, the mind automatically goes through the very process of remembering backwards you have been practising so long, and so you can then gather clues to all the events of that last life.

Once this difficult point of passing from birth to death is got over, the rest is said in the books to be easy. You can then, daily, with more and more facility, remember the deeds and thoughts of your past lives; one after another will open before your mental vision. You will see yourself living a thousand lives, you will feel yourself dying a thousand deaths, you will suffer with the suffering of a myriad existences, you will see how fleeting were their little joys, what price you had again and again to pay for a little happiness;—how real and terrible were the sufferings you had to endure. You will watch how for years you toiled to amass a little fortune, and how bitter death was that time, because you could not take your treasure with you; you will see the innumerable women you have thought of as the only being you could ever love, and lakh upon lakh of beings caught like yourself in the whirling Wheel of Life and Death; some now your father, mother, children, some again your friends, and now your bitter enemies. You will see the good deed, the loving thought and act, bearing rich harvest life after life, and the sad gathering of ill weeds, the harvest of ancient wrongs. You will see the beginningless fabric of your lives, with its ever-changing pattern stretching back, back, back into interminable vistas of past time,

and then at last you will know, and will understand. You will understand how this happy life for which we crave is never to be gained; you will realise, as no books or monks could teach you, the sorrow and impermanence and soullessness of all lives; and you will then be very much stirred up to make a mighty effort, now that human birth and this knowledge is yours;—a supreme effort to wake up out of all this ill dream of life as a man awakes himself out of a fearful nightmare. And this intense aspiration will, say the Holy Books, go very far towards effecting your liberation.

There is another form of meditation which is very helpful, the more so as it is not necessarily confined to any one particular time of the day, but can be done always, whenever we have a moment in which our mind is not engaged. This is the *Mahasatipatthana*, or great reflection. Whatever you are doing, just observe and make a mental note of it, being careful to understand of what you see that it is possessed of the Three Characteristics of Sorrow, Impermanence and lack of an Immortal Principle of soul. Think of the action you are performing, the thought you are thinking, the sensation you are feeling, as relating to some exterior person; take care not to think "*I* am doing so-and-so" but "there exists such-and-such a state of action." Thus, take bodily actions. When you go walking, just concentrate the whole of your attention upon what you are doing, in an impersonal kind of way. Think "now he is raising his left foot," or, better, "there is an action of the lifting of a left foot." "Now there is a raising of the right foot, now the body leans a little forwards, and so advances, now it turns to the right, and now it stands still." In this way, just practise concentrating the mind in observing

all the actions that you perform, all the sensations that arise in your body, all the thoughts that arise in your mind, and always analyse each concentration object thus (as in the case cited above, of the bodily action of walking). "What is it that walks?" and by accurate analysis you reflect that there is no person or soul within the body that walks, but that there is a particular collection of chemical elements, united and held together by the result of certain categories of forces, as cohesion, chemical attraction, and the like: that these acting in unison, owing to a definite state of co-ordination, appear to walk, move this way and that, and so on, owing to and concurrent with the occurrence of certain chemical decompositions going on in brain and nerve and muscle and blood, etc., that this state of co-ordination which renders such complex actions possible is the resultant of the forces of innumerable similar states of co-ordination; that the resultant of all these past states of co-ordination acting together constitute what is called a living human being; that owing to certain other decompositions and movements of the fine particles composing the brain, the idea arises, "I am walking," but really there is no "I" to walk or go, but only an ever-changing mass of decomposing chemical compounds;* that such a decomposing mass of chemical compounds has in it nothing that is permanent, but is, on the other hand, subject to pain and grief and weariness of body and mind; that its principal tendency is to form new sets of co-ordinated forces of a similar nature—new Sankháras which in their turn will cause new similar combinations of chemical elements to arise,

* The student should remember that this is only one (illusory) point of view. The idealistic ego-centric position is just as true and as false.—A. C.

thus making an endless chain of beings subject to the miseries of birth, disease, decay, old age and death; and that the only way of escape from the perpetual round of existences is the following of the Noble Eightfold Path declared by the Sámmasambuddha, and that it is only by diligent practice of His Precepts that we can obtain the necessary energy of the performance of Concentration; and that by Sammásati and Sammásamádhi alone the final release from all this suffering is to be obtained; and that by practising earnestly these reflections and meditations the way to liberation will be opened for us—even the way which leads to Nirvàna, the State of Changeless Peace to which the Master has declared the way. Thus do you constantly reflect, alike on the Body, Sensations, Ideas, Sankháras, and the Consciousness.

Such is a little part of the way of Meditation, the way whereby the mind and heart may be purified and cultivated. And now for a few final remarks.

It must first be remembered that no amount of reading or talking about these things is worth a single moment's practice of them. These are things to be *done*, not speculated upon; and only he who practises can obtain the fruits of meditation.

There is one other thing to be said, and that is concerning the importance of Sila. It has been said that Sila alone cannot conduct to the Nirvàna Dharma; but, nevertheless, this Sila is of the most vital importance, for there is no Samadhi without Sila. And why? Because, reverting to our simile of the steam-engine, whilst Samadhi, mental concentration, is the steam power of this human machine, the fire that heats the water, the fire that makes that steam and maintains it at high pressure is the power of Sila. A

man who breaks Sila is putting out his fires; and sooner or later, according to his reserve stock of Sila fuel, he will have little or no more energy at his disposal. And so, this Sila is of eminent importance; we must avoid evil, we must fulfil all good, for only in this way can we obtain energy to practise and apply our Buddhist philosophy; only in this way can we carry into effect that third Rule of the Stanza which has been our text; only thus can we really follow in our Master's Footsteps, and carry into effect His Rule for the Purification of the mind. Only by this way, and by constantly bearing in mind and living up to his final utterance—"Athakho, Bhikkhave, amentayami vo; Vayadhmama Sankhara, Appamadena Sampadetha."

"Lo! now, Oh Brothers, I exhort ye! Decay is inherent in all the Tendencies, therefore deliver ye yourselves by earnest effort."

ANANDA METTEYA.