LISTEN, CONTEMPLATE, MEDITATE
ON THE PĀLI TIPIKAKA SERIES

THE JĀTAKA TALES

Mahapurisa Editorial Team
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ON

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Mahapurisa Publications
Dedication & Acknowledgement

This book is dedicated to all beings who have preserved and interpreted the ancient Pāli Tipitaka in various forms. It is through their hard work that we are now able to present this ancient tradition of Listening, Contemplating, Meditating on the words of the Buddha.

We would like to thank Madam Christine Tsun and everyone involved for their dedication and support in the production of this book.

It is advisable for readers to undergo systematic training and seek proper guidance from qualified teachers before applying the materials in this book.
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Introduction To The *Listen, Contemplate, Meditate* on The Pāli Tipitaka Series

More than two thousand five hundred years ago at Gaya, India, Sākyamuni Buddha, resplendent with his thirty-two great marks and multiple perfections of a Mahapurisa, sat under a luxuriant bodhi tree, preaching to a great assembly of bhikkhus. The one thousand bhikkhus seated in mindful attentiveness filled the large clearing before Him. Many radiant gods and devas had gathered around. The surrounding forest was softly silent and serene as the birds and animals respectfully halted their activities. With a lion’s roar, the Buddha preached the Fire Sermon\(^1\). While the Buddha was speaking, all the monks, delighted at His words, were enlightened.

It is conceivable that every word of Sākyamuni Buddha, a great being who had endeavoured for full awakening for four countless asankheyyas\(^2\) and 100,000 mahakappas\(^3\) for the liberation of sentient beings, would embody the essence of Enlightenment. Indeed, before His Parinibbāna, He had proclaimed to His bhikkhus that the Dhamma and Vinaya shall be their teacher after His demise\(^4\).

Therefore, this Series aims to reveal that the key to awakening is in the ancient tradition of *Listening, Contemplating, Meditating* on the Pāli Tipitaka, the actual words of the Buddha.

The Pāli Tipitaka consists of the three collections of the Buddha’s words, namely, the Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka.

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1. Ādittapariyāya Sutta, Samyutta Nikāya 35.28
2. Incalculable, the highest numerical written with 141 ciphers
3. World cycle
4. Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, Digha Nikāya
Generally, the Dhamma is practiced based on a progressive approach. The *Listening* to or reading of the Pāli Tipitaka is considered Pariyatti (theory, intellectual study). Then, the practitioner goes on to Patipatti (practice) and eventually penetrates the truth, Pativedha. However, in the system of *Listening, Contemplating, Meditating* on the Pāli Tipitaka, the abovementioned processes are experienced in an integrated and even, concurrent manner.

Each book in this Series covers a critical aspect of one of the components of the Pāli Tipitaka of Sutta, Vinaya and Abhidhamma. They provide guidance on how to effectively explore and utilise the Pāli Tipitaka through *Listening, Contemplating, Meditating* to unlock the Buddha’s wisdom and realisations embedded and preserved in the words.

While the books are aimed at enriching experienced and learned Dhamma practitioners, readers who are new to the Dhamma will also be able to enjoy and appreciate them. Earnest seekers of the truth may find that the Series helps to fill in some of the gaps and enhance their views, knowledge and practice. Written to provide a glimpse of the enlightened world of a Great Being, Mahapurisa, we hope that you will find the pages replete with multi-faceted gems of wisdom that inspire you to lead an awakened life, right here and right now.

**Book One**

The Jātaka Tales have been chosen to launch the Series as they are the expedient means to introduce the key concepts essential to the system of *Listen, Contemplate, Meditate* on the Pāli Tipitaka. They are seemingly the lightest component of the Pāli Tipitaka and yet, they have the brilliant efficacy
of transforming a person’s mind and attitudes, enroute to awakening from the captivating but deceptive reality of Samsāra.
CHAPTER ONE

LISTEN, CONTEMPLATE, MEDITATE ON THE JĀTAKA TALES
LISTEN, CONTEMPLATE, MEDITATE ON THE JĀTAKA TALES

Listening to (or Reading) the Jātaka Tales

The Jātaka tales, compiled in the Khuddhaka Nikāya of the Sutta Pitaka, are a voluminous body of stories concerning the previous births of Sākyamuni Buddha in a myriad of forms. In those lives, the future Buddha, had appeared as a king, a poor man, a robber, an outcast, a god, an animal and so forth, who underwent tremendous trials and tribulations and emerged victorious at the end. The Buddha would relate a past life story to a person and amazingly, at the end of the story, he or she would become enlightened.

Each tale is an artful and engaging way to convey a lesson such as the importance of virtue or a certain code of conduct. More profoundly, subtly woven within the tapestry of each Jātaka tale are insights into the wisdom and conduct of a Mahapurisa or a Great Being. A Mahapurisa is a person who has reached the pinnacle of evolution of all beings. He appears either as a Wheel Turning Monarch or a Sammā Sambuddha.

The Jātaka Tales provide examples, and not conclusive solutions, on how to navigate through the complexities and challenges of life by the profound understanding and application of Dependent Origination (Paticca Sammupada).

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5 Jataka Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved 2011-12-04
6 Paticca-samuppada-vibhanga Sutta Samyutta Nikāya 12.2
More than just fairy tales, they can also serve as excellent case studies on how to live an engaged awakened life, even in this day and age.

So basically, to Listen to the Jātaka tales means to appreciate and comprehend the whole story with an open attitude of a genuine seeker of truth and glean the story’s hidden nuances. The real meaning of these hidden nuances are to be fully unfolded when contemplating and meditating.

**Contemplating the Jātaka tales through the nuances of Dependent Origination**

The crucial mindset of a Mahapurisa is that He views things based entirely on Dependent Origination. Unique to Buddhism, Dependent Origination is the most exceptional teaching of the Buddha. Its apex position was declared by the Buddha Himself as “One who sees Dependent Origination sees the Dhamma; one who sees the Dhamma sees Dependent Origination”.

Dependent Origination, in brief, means everything is interrelated. Absolutely nothing has an independent inherent existence. It has four important qualities, namely, non-conclusive conclusion, necessity, invariability of change and conditionality. Traditionally, Dependent Origination is often mistakenly interpreted as “A” produces “B”. Then, there are authoritative studies which correctly understand it as “A” co-arising with “B”. However, hitherto, the teaching of Dependent Origination as having these four crucial qualities has never been emphasized, intensively studied or deeply comprehended and succinctly stated. This, we submit, is the pinnacle approach to Dependent Origination.

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7 Majjhima Nikāya Sutta 28 Mahāhathipadopama Sutta
8 ‘tathatā avitathatā ananñathatā idappaccayatā ayam vuccati … paticcasamuppādo Paccaya Sutta (No 20), Nidānavagga Nidānasamyutta, Samyutta Nikāya
What are the four qualities?

1. Non-Conclusive Conclusion

   Non-conclusive Conclusion of Dependent Origination means that:
   “Nothing is what you wish to conclude, as it is there or it is not there.
   It is not what you wish to conclude it is or it is not.
   It is not what we like to conclude as it is nothing or it is something.”

   In other words, the trick is, due to the interdependency of conditions, we should never hastily jump to any conclusion or remain fixated on any one view and yet, for ostensible progressive development, we also need to conclude inconclusively.

2. Necessity

   The quality of “Necessity” of Dependent Origination is that it is the all invasive, ever impending law which overwhelms and governs every single aspect of sentient beings. It compulsively conditions and reconditions the lives of all sentient beings from all angles, even if uninvited.

   Fire necessarily burns. Whether a person is ignorant or aware of the quality of a burning fire, he will be burnt. Hence, this quality of necessity can be interpreted in a more practical sense as it is necessary for us to know and apply Dependent Origination in our daily lives or else, we will be immediately caught in the backlash. Every gain simultaneously invites a loss. Whether a person has this knowledge or not, while he is enjoying a gain, inevitably, the hard knock of loss will immediately haunt him. Therefore, it is necessary to know the necessity quality of Dependent Origination.
3. Invariability of Change™

The Invariability of Change of Dependent Origination means that all conditions are consistently impermanent. This means that we will always experience the unchanging reality of change.

As an illustration, it is like a continuously reshuffled deck of playing cards which is dealt out with no set rules, in infinite configurations, be it 3 cards or 10 cards or 27 cards or any combination, all from that seemingly fixed deck of cards. Invariability is the fixed set of cards and Change is the infinite configurations of this fixed set of cards.

4. Conditionality

Conditionality means that all conditions at the same time invariably unfold infinite permutations and possibilities. As an example, if “0” co-arises with “1”, when we have condition “0”, conditionally “0” can give rise to another “0”, “0” can give rise to “1”, “0” can give rise to “01” or “10”, “0” can give rise to “00” or “11”, etc.

As another example, Prince William is a condition which could interplay with many sets of conditionalities. The first set of conditionality is his nuclear family, Princess Kate, Prince George and Princess Charlotte. The second set is his immediate family, Prince Charles, the late Princess Diana and Prince Harry. The third set of conditionality is his subjects. Prince William is just a condition which is a reflection of an interplay of myriad sets of conditionalities. He is reflectively a “son”, a “husband”, a “father”, a “future king” and other infinite conditionalities.
In summary, non-conclusive conclusion of Dependent Origination, reveals that each situation may have an apparent conclusion but it is non-conclusive. Dependent Origination is a necessity because it governs every aspect of life and therefore, we need to face all conditions with earnestness and fearlessness. Otherwise, they will consume you, now or slowly. If Dependent Origination is correctly understood and the invariability of change of conditions accordingly navigated, we will triumph over the matrix of conditions within infinite conditionalities.

Therefore, in essence, to Contemplate on a Jātaka Tale is to analyse the story from different angles of the Dhamma through the four qualities of Dependent Origination.

Meditating on the Jātaka with the mindset of a Mahapurisa

A person aspiring for Buddhahood or enlightenment needs to understand, emulate and eventually embody this supreme mindset of a Mahapurisa. This is the mindset which brings us closer to reality and is essential for the ultimate realisation of Nibbāna.

A Mahapurisa acts not from an ordinary mind but with a vast and encompassing understanding of the play of conditionality. The future Buddha having gone beyond his mundane self, the need for security, self-pity and all forms of self-cherishing, had transcended conditionality and was free from all mental conceptions. Free of concepts, a liberated mind respects the truth without concluding it as the only or absolute truth.

While the observance of morality and virtue will invariably bring wholesome results, overly grasping to these concepts will also bind a person to the entangled world of never ending
kammic indebtedness. Nonetheless, it is still necessary to counter-balance defilements with virtue.

Therefore, a Mahapurisa applies virtue with a deep appreciation of the knowledge of conditionality. He knows that even though it may be very challenging to apply such an engaging truth, His goal is the ultimate triumphant reality of Nibbāna (unconditioned ultimate reality). Concerned only with the highest aim of awakening, a Mahapurisa goes beyond the idea of morality and certainly, beyond immorality. Even the most subtle mind of humility has to be dismantled at this peak of evolution. The “I” has to be disowned so that the ultimate truth can now completely unfold without obstruction for the full blossoming of a Mahapurisa’s omniscience.

Some of the Jātaka tales may appear “harsh” and not appeasing or indulging our human fantasies or pandering to the security that the ordinary mind expects. Through the Jātaka tales, the future Buddha showed that everyone’s dream of perfection in Samsāra, the entangled world that we live in, can never be fully satisfied. The future Buddha seemingly abided by concepts of “morality” only to help sentient beings to awaken.⁹

The mindset and attitude of a Mahapurisa are exemplified by the culminating acts of the future Buddha towards his ultimate goal in his second last human birth as King Vessantara. In that Jātaka tale, the future Buddha sacrificed everything that he loved to free himself and his loved ones from self-cherishing and conceit. Forsaking social conventions and so called moral responsibility to his family, he even gave away his wife and children. Motivated by great compassion, he did everything only for the all-liberating Dhamma. Ultimately, he triumphed over the chains of conditionality.

⁹ While undeniably the collective observance of moral principles and rules are extremely important for a cohesive harmonious society, it is important to also reflect that on the other hand, a rigid and absolute application and adherence to such same rules without wisdom and discernment can also lead to regression, oppression, hardship and abuse.
by forsaking the last taint of humanity, to complete his omniscience that truly liberates all sentient beings.

Therefore, essentially, to Meditate on a Jātaka Tale is to bring together the dramatic events of self-pity, bravery, betrayal, narrow escape, etc from the Listening component and the Dhamma of Dependent Origination and its nuances from the Contemplating component to finally unmask the liberating all-encompassing enlightened world of a Mahapurisa which has been appropriately earned.

By way of analogy, the drama is like the chaotic and jumbled pieces of a jigsaw puzzle while the Dhamma is like the rules for putting together the pieces to reveal the complete grand picture of the reality of Samsāra won over. The conflicting mundane dramatic events and the pristine supra mundane Dhamma are now finally reconciled, the quest for the holy grail of humanity is accomplished.

**Summary**

*Listening, Contemplating, Meditating* on the Jātaka tales is the expedient means that maintains a deep respect for the profound qualities of conditionalities and the knowledge to go beyond it. Without the mindset of a Mahapurisa and the heedfulness towards the four qualities of Dependent Origination, we will not be able to accomplish the key meditation aspect that unmistakably reveals the whole workings of the universe.

Hence, essentially, the process of *Listening, Contemplating, Meditating* is a multi-faceted system of study that invites myriad ways of interpretation. More importantly, in these modern times, it serves to shorten the whole tedious process of traditional gradual training into a simultaneous methodology of training (*Listening, Contemplating, Meditating* in one complete picture).
We have chosen the following fifteen Jātaka tales not only for their unique and captivating plots but also because they provide good illustrations of the methodology explained above. The analyses for the Jātaka tales provided under Contemplate and Meditate are merely guides. They are intended to give you an idea of some of the many aspects and facets of the Dhamma which may be overlooked from a first reading of a tale. Although each Jātaka tale has been classified under a specific quality of Dependent Origination, within each story itself, all the four qualities are inseparably embedded.

It is hoped that you will, thereafter, be able to skilfully Listen, Contemplate, Meditate on the Jātaka tales and penetrate into the world of a Mahapurisa and then, with a deeper understanding and appreciation of Dependent Origination, transform your apparent ordinary and mundane human existence into an all victorious celebration of life.
CHAPTER TWO

THE JĀTAKA TALES

THE QUALITY OF NON-CONCLUSIVITY
Chapter 2

THE QUALITY OF NON-COCLUSIVITY

1. CULLAKĀLINGA JĀTAKA (NO. 301)
   An Unexpected Twist To An Expected Outcome

Listen

This story was related by the Buddha while He was living at Jetavana Monastery in relation to the admission of four female ascetics into the nun’s order by Sāriputta after they had lost to him in a debate.

In a previous life, a long time ago, the future Buddha was an ascetic living in a hermitage at the border of two kingdoms, Kālinga and Potali. Powerful King Kālinga of the Kālinga kingdom had a great army but no worthy opponent. So eager was the king for battle that he sent his four daughters, all of unsurpassed beauty, fully adorned with jewellery on a royal carriage, to every town and city as an offering to any king who would fight him and win.

However, wherever the daughters went, the other kings denied them entry into their cities out of fear. Travelling far and wide, the carriage reached the city of Assaka, in the kingdom of Potali, ruled by King Assaka. The king refused the carriage entry into the city for fear of defeat but his wise and astute minister, Nandisena, thought, “India will appear weak as no one wants to battle Kālinga. I will battle with Kālinga.”

With this thought, Nandisena ordered the guards to allow King Kālinga’s daughters to enter the city. Nandisena assured King Assaka that he would emerge victorious, after which the
king should wed the princesses and declare them his chief queens.

Informed of this impending battle, King Kālinga, with great excitement, gathered a great army at the border of the country of Potali. Disguising himself, King Kālinga approached the ascetic, the future Buddha and asked, “Between Kālinga and Assaka, who will hold the banner of victory?” The future Buddha answered, “One will conquer, the other will be defeated. I can tell you no more. I will ask Sakka, King of Heaven. Come back tomorrow.”

The next day, the future Buddha reported to King Kālinga that Lord Sakka had predicted his victory. Delighted with the prediction, King Kālinga returned to camp.

Soon, word spread to King Assaka of the ascetic’s prediction. He then confronted Nandisena in anger. Nandisena pacified the king and quickly went to visit the ascetic to ask who would win. Receiving the same answer, Nandisena enquired further, “What will be the omen for the one that conquers and the omen for the one that is defeated?” The ascetic answered, “The guardian deity of the conqueror will be a white bull and the other king’s deity will be a black bull. These gods themselves will fight and one will be victorious, the other defeated.”

Hearing this, Nandisena mustered one thousand of the most loyal warriors who will fight and die for their king. Thus, the battle commenced. The two kings faced each other together with their great armies. The guardian deities were visible only to both kings. King Assaka revealed to Nandisena, “I see Kālinga’s deity in the form of a white bull whilst ours is in the form of a black bull looking distressed.” Nandisena requested the king to throw his spear at Kālinga’s deity and ordered his one thousand best warriors to follow suit.

Following Nandisena’s instructions, Kālinga’s deity, the great white bull, succumbed to the torrent of spears, collapsed
and died on the spot. Thus, King Kālinga was defeated. On fleeing back to his own kingdom in fear, he reproached the ascetic, saying, “Honest folk should never lie.”

The ascetic asked Lord Sakka, “Why, as gods do not lie, did you do so in this circumstance?” Sakka replied, “Fixed predictions may not always come true. Through fearless prowess, great courage and adventurous might, Assaka had won the battle instead.”

In that story, the Buddha was the ascetic, Sāriputta was Nandisena and the four female ascetics were the daughters of King Kālinga.

Contemplate

*Non-conclusive conclusion* starts with Nandisena, the king’s advisor, having the idea of opening the gate to welcome the daughters of King Kālinga. At that point, it was possible to conclude that the great army of King Kālinga would defeat King Assaka. However, even though Nandisena had no specific idea as to how to defeat King Kālinga, the wise Nandisena would not have advised his king to do something so reckless without any positive foresight.

Either of the two views – to not open the gate and be safe but India would appear weak; or open the gate but the great army will definitely defeat King Assaka are both conclusive conclusions. Neither of it brings any benefit. On the other hand, Nandisena’s thought of challenging King Kālinga and finding a way to win may have been a very risky gamble but it was a view which opened up a host of possibilities. This is a great example of *non-conclusive conclusion*.

Although King Sakka had predicted the victory of King Kālinga, the wise Nandisena probed further with an appropriate question to fully understand the whole
conditionality of the prediction. With astute courage, he devised a solution for his king to succeed. Thus, *non-conclusive conclusion* triumphed over the apparent conditionality of King Kālinga’s victory.

This Jātaka Tale further demonstrates that a seemingly inevitable and conclusive prophecy or even reality could miraculously be thwarted with a deeper understanding of *Dependent Origination*. By comprehending the play of conditions, the ostensible overconsuming reality can be conquered.

**Meditate**

*In Culla Kālinga Jātaka, the future Buddha, an ascetic with great equanimity, answered the questions probed by both the warring parties of the prophecy of King Sakka. King Assaka together with his one thousand well-trained warriors, won the battle by courageously targeting to kill the god protector of King Kālinga. Nandisena confronted and overcame the state of fear caused by the original prophecy that King Kālinga shall win. The equanimity of total conditionality of the ascetic, the future Buddha, together with further probing to go beyond the chain of conditionality by the wise advisor, Nandisena, helped King Assaka to win the seemingly unwinnable war. Ultimately, by not succumbing to any conclusive conclusion that slowly kills, Nandisena emerged as a courageous hero.*
The Quality of Non-Conclusivity

“The inner conditionality and the outer conditionality
Every generation is conditioned in conditionalities.
And so I ask of Gotama this question:
Who succeeds in disconditioning these conditionalities?” ¹⁰

Truly, the gate to Enlightenment opens with asking the right questions.

¹⁰ Samyutta Nikāya Sagāthāvagga Devatasamuyutta Sativaggo Jatā Sutta 55 Note: The word “jatā” is loosely translated as “conditionality” instead of “entanglement” since entanglement is due to conditionality.
2. BABBU JĀTAKA (NO. 137)

*Misfortune Or Good Fortune, Who Knows?*

Listen

During the Buddha’s lifetime, there was a lady named Kānā and her mother who was a stream enterer. One day, Kānā who was visiting her mother decided to go back to her husband. Her mother told her to wait until she had baked a cake for her to bring home. However, just after the cake was baked, a monk came on alms round and Kānā’s mother immediately offered the cake to the monk instead. Upon his return to the monastery, the monk told a second monk to go to Kānā’s mother’s house for another cake. When Kānā’s mother had just finished baking the second cake for her daughter, the second monk came and the cake was offered to him too. He told a third monk, and the third told a fourth and so each freshly baked cake was taken by a new monk.

In the meantime, Kānā’s husband had sent a message stating that he would marry a new wife if Kānā did not return. Due to the delay, Kānā was unable to make it home before the husband remarried. She was extremely depressed and developed a strong hatred against monks. At that time, the Buddha was in Jetavana Monastery. Being informed of the story above, He told this past story about Kānā’s mother.

Once upon a time, when Brahmaadatta was reigning in Benares, the future Buddha was born as an expert stone cutter who quarryied and shaped stones in a deserted village. In the past, when that village was occupied, a rich merchant and his wife had lived there. Due to strong attachment to her husband’s wealth, after death, the wife was re-born there as a mouse that dwelt over her wealth of four hundred million gold coins. Over time, the village gradually became deserted.
As it happens, the mouse fell in love with the stone cutter. Thinking how the secret of all her vast wealth would die with her, the mouse conceived the idea of enjoying it with him. Thus, every day, she would bring a coin in her mouth to the stone cutter for him to buy some meat for her with part of the coin and save the balance.

However, this peaceful existence was not to last. One day, the mouse was caught by a cat. Trapped in the clutches of the cat, to save herself, the mouse promised to bring meat to the cat daily. Thus, the mouse gave the cat half her share of the meat given by the stone cutter and kept half for herself. Unfortunately, the next day, the mouse was caught by another cat. Again, to save herself, the mouse also offered to provide meat to the other cat every day. She now had to divide the meat given by the stone cutter into three portions, two portions for the two cats and one for herself.

As fate would have it, the poor mouse was caught by a third and fourth cat. Offering meat to each cat in turn to save herself from being eaten, the mouse had very little left for herself and was soon reduced to just skin and bones. Seeing his emaciated friend, the stone cutter asked the reason. Upon hearing her story, the future Buddha devised a plan to help her out of her predicament.

The stone cutter carved a cavity in a block of purest crystal. He made the mouse get inside and told her to fiercely threaten and revile all who came near. Shortly, up came one of the cats demanding its share of the meat. Provoked by the mouse, the cat sprang at her, not knowing she was inside a crystal. The cat smashed into the crystal and broke the walls of its chest, dying instantly. The same fate in turn befell the three other cats.

Thereafter, the grateful mouse brought the future Buddha double the amount of coins. By degrees, she gave him the
whole of the hoard. In unbroken friendship, the two lived together till the end of their lives.

The mouse was later reborn as Kānā’s mother, who became a stream-enterer, in the Buddha’s lifetime. The four monks who received the cakes from Kānā’s mother were the four cats. Kānā herself also became a stream-enterer after listening to the Buddha’s discourse. When the king heard that Kānā was enlightened, he adopted Kānā as his oldest daughter and issued a proclamation for a noble to marry her. A great noble married her and endowed her with his lordly power and wealth. Henceforth, Kānā ministered to all monks and nuns who came to her house and sought for more sangha members to serve until there were no more to be found.11

Contemplate

In this Jātaka tale, Kānā had concluded that she would return to her husband. However, this conclusion was non-conclusive as it was dependent on future conditionalities. Since she did not fulfil her husband’s demand, by virtue of necessity, the backlash was inevitable. In accordance with invariability of change, the husband left her for another woman. Ironically, this was also one of the conditions which led Kānā to eventually triumph over her misfortune to become the eldest daughter of the king and the wife of a great noble and most importantly, to deeply comprehend conditionality.

In this tale, going beyond morality and non-morality and without discursive second thoughts, the future Buddha had conditionally used deceptive means to counter the threats and the desire of the cats.

An example of non-conclusive conclusion, it cannot be concluded conclusively that the then seemingly untoward encounter between the mouse and four cats and the future

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11 This paragraph is from the Dhammapada Commentary of verse 82
Buddha’s involvement in the past were inauspicious as these conditions eventually resulted in Kānā’s mother becoming a stream-enterer, the four cats ordaining as Bhikkhus and Kānā’s good fortune and awakening in the Buddha’s final birth.

“Abandoning own views, not grasping (at more)  
And even in knowledge not seeking support,  
Monk those who dispute he never takes sides,  
To the various views he does not recourse  
Having no bias for either extreme –  
Not craving becoming nor non-becoming  
Either here in this life or in the next world  
For him there is not an attachment to views  
While examining Dhamma held true  
Concerning the seen, the heard and cognized  
Not the least notion is fashioned by him  
That Brahmin (perfected) grasps at no view,  
By whom in the world then, could he be described?  
They fashion no views nor pursue them at all  
Doctrines are never accepted by them  
The Brahmin (perfected) not guided by rites  
Beyond has he gone, not leaning on views.”

Here, the Buddha praised a sage who holds no view but examines the truth with non-conclusive conclusion, the highest quality of mind that abandons all views with non-grasping. Without bias for either extremes, he continues to examine all Dhamma. Understanding invariably of change and at ease with all the changes, such a person could be a Brahmin, a perfected being. Finally, without grasping to rites and rituals and living within the principles of Dependent Origination, he is victorious over conditionalites.

12 Sutta Nipata 4.5 Paramatthaka Sutta, Pāli Text Society verses 796-803 Translated by Bhikkhu Khantipalo
Meditate

The conundrum which Kānā found herself in was sacrificially challenging. She had to struggle between her faith in her mother and the threat of her husband leaving her. When she lost her husband, she “collapsed”. She could not tolerate the mother’s loyalty to the Triple Gem eclipsing family allegiances.

Her faith had brought her thus far but it had to finally blossom in her own realisation of conditionality over illusory family relationships. The past life event of her mother and the monks as the mouse feeding the cats, which had led to her present life’s apparent misfortune enabled her to see the transient nature of family ties for which she had harboured anger in losing.

Finally, she transcended the binds of family relationships through seeing the crystal clear nature of all those unrelated and chaotic elements of life, realising the unconditioned Nibbāna. The perfect picture of gain, loss, happiness and anger never departed from the “crystal” display. All is nothing except to transcend conditionality by having an unshakeable mind towards all phenomena. This is to preside at perfect equipoise as Sotāpanna, the first stage of sainthood.
This story was told by the Buddha, at Jetavana Monastery about a self-willed monk.

A long time ago, there was a brahmin in a village who knew a charm called Vedabbha. When the charm was repeated during a certain conjunction of the planets and with the reciter’s gaze bent upwards to the skies, the heavens would rain seven precious things - gold, silver, pearls, corals, cat’s eyes, rubies and diamonds. The future Buddha was a pupil of this brahmin.

One day, he and his master travelled to the country of Ceti. In a forest along the way, dwelt five hundred robbers known as “the Despatchers”. They were called the Despatchers because of every two prisoners they took, they would despatch one to fetch the ransom. If they captured a father and a son, they sent the father to go for the ransom to free his son. If they caught two brothers, they let the elder go and if they caught a teacher and his pupil, they set free the pupil.

Unfortunately, the Despatchers waylaid and captured the future Buddha and the Vedabbha Brahmin. According to their usual modus operandi, they kept the master and sent the pupil for the ransom. Before departing, the future Buddha said with a bow to his master, “In a day or two, I shall surely come back. Have no fear and please listen to what I say. The conjunction of the planets which brings about the rain of precious things will occur today. Please be careful and do not succumb to this temptation. Do not repeat the charm and call down the precious shower. For, if you do, calamity will certainly befall both you and this band of robbers.” With this warning, the future Buddha left in quest of the ransom.
At sunset, the full moon rose over the eastern horizon. The brāhmin, studying the heavens, saw that the great conjunction was taking place. “Why should I suffer this misery?” he thought. “By repeating the charm I will call down the precious rain, pay the robbers the ransom and go free.”

So he called out to the robbers, “Friends, why am I a prisoner?” “To get a ransom, reverend sir,” they replied. “Well, if that is all you want,” said the brāhmin, “Quickly untie me, bathe my head, put new clothes on me and perfume and deck me with flowers. Then leave me to myself.” The robbers did as they were told.

The brāhmin, marking the conjunction of the planets, recited his charm with eyes uplifted to the heavens. Forthwith the precious things poured down from the skies. The robbers greedily gathered them all up, wrapping their booty into bundles with their cloaks. Then, they marched away with the brāhmin following in the rear. But, as luck would have it, the party was captured by a second band of five hundred robbers!

“Why do you seize us?” said the first to the second band. “For booty,” was the answer. “If booty is what you want, seize that brāhmin, who by simply gazing up at the skies brought down riches as rain. It was he who gave us all that we have got.”

So the second band of robbers let the first band go and quickly seized the brāhmin, crying, “Give us riches too!” “It would give me great pleasure,” said the brāhmin, “but it will be a year before the necessary conjunction of the planets takes place again. If you will only be so kind as to wait till then, I will summon the precious shower for you.” “Scamp!” cried the angry robbers, “you made the other band rich immediately, but want us to wait a whole year!” And with one swing of their sharp sword, they cut him in two and flung his body in the middle of the road.
Then, hurrying after the first band of robbers, they killed every man in hand-to-hand fight and grabbed the booty. Next, amongst themselves, they broke into two groups and fought till two hundred and fifty men were slained. The bloody massacre went on until only two were left alive. Thus, almost all of the thousand men perished.

Now, the two remaining survivors quickly carried off the treasure and hid it in the jungle near a village. They decided that one of them should, sword in hand, guard the hoard whilst the other should go into the village to get rice and have it cooked for supper. Covetousness arose and the robber who remained behind considered, “When he comes back, he'll want half of this. What if I kill him the moment he gets back.” So he drew his sword and waited for his mate’s return. Meanwhile, the other had similarly reflected that the booty had to be halved and thought to himself, “What if I poison the rice and give it to him to eat and kill him. I will have the whole of the treasure to myself.” Hence, when the rice was cooked, he first ate his own share and then put poison in the rest which he carried back with him to the jungle. He had barely set it down when the other robber raised his sword and slayed him. The last robber quickly hid the body away in a secluded area. Then, he sat down to eat the poisoned rice and instantly met his end.

Thus, by reason of the treasures, not only the brahmin but all the robbers came to destruction.

After a day or two, the future Buddha came back with the ransom. Not finding his master where he had left him, but seeing treasures strewn all around, he feared that, in spite of his advice, his master had invoked the charm with disastrous consequences. So he proceeded quickly along the road.

He soon came to where his master’s body laid. “Alas!” he cried, “he is dead through not heeding my warning.” Then he made a pyre with gathered sticks and cremated his master’s
body with an offering of wild flowers. Further along the road, he came upon the five hundred bodies of the Despatchers and further still, upon the other corpses.

He noted that of the thousand, all but two had perished and was certain that there must be two survivors and that those two could not refrain from trouble. So, he pressed on till he found the path by which they had turned into the jungle and there he came upon the heap of bundles of treasure and one robber lying dead with his rice-bowl overturned at his side. Realising the whole story at a glance, the future Buddha searched for the missing man and eventually, found his body in the secret area where it had been flung. The future Buddha thought, “Through not following my advice, my master in his self-will brought about destruction, not only upon himself but also a thousand others. Truly, those who seek their own gain by mistaken and misguided means shall reap ruin, even as my master did.”

And he uttered this stanza:-

“Misguided effort leads to loss, not gain,
Thieves killed Vedabbha and themselves were slain.”

And he went on to say,

“And even as my master’s misguided and misplaced effort in causing the rain of treasure to fall from heaven wrought both his own death and the destruction of others with him, even so shall every other man who by mistaken means seeks to compass his own advantage, utterly perish and involve others in his destruction.”

The forest resounded with the words of truth of the future Buddha and the tree-fairies rejoiced.
He carried the treasures home where he lived out his life by almsgiving and other good works. At the close of his life, he was reborn in the heavenly realms as he so richly deserved. In that lifetime, the self-willed monk was the teacher and the Buddha was the pupil.

Contemplate

The brutal death of the thousand robbers and the teacher depicts Samsāra as the fertile ground for self-cherishing. This self is constantly in mindless pursuit of money and power without knowledge of *conditionality*. By not cherishing self, the future Buddha managed to escape this entanglement. For someone who practices the path of self-dismantling, it must have been most disconcerting to witness the last two robbers (important enemy of “I” and “you”), after the mass killing of “they”, the 998 robbers.

The brahmin may have mastered such a special wealth charm but by not mastering the greatest charm of all - that of *conditionality* – ironically, the special wealth charm led to his brutal demise and the slaughter of a thousand robbers instead.

Understanding *non-conclusive conclusion*, the future Buddha had warned his master not to conclude that by using the charm he would be safe. He knew that the simplistic conclusion would lead to backlash.

The future Buddha who understood *conditionality* had done his best according to the conditions. Although he had taken steps to warn his master, he was not able to prevent the deaths of his master and the one thousand robbers. He had remained calm when witnessing the mayhem. The illusory “I” falls away when conditionality is fully understood.
Every moment is about seeing a different angle or perspective of the middle path and not anchoring into a view of middle path. This is *non-conclusive conclusion*. It is almost coming and thus gone. When a person awakes to the fact that everything is impermanent, he should not be too confident with his insight. The beauty of the wisdom within the knowledge of *conditionality* is that it will always liberate and not shackle us to any view.

Venerable Ānanda said: ‘It is wonderful, Lord, it is marvellous how profound this Dependent Origination is, and how profound it appears! And yet it appears to me as clear as clear!’ the Buddha replied: ‘Do not say that, Ānanda, do not say that!’

**Meditate**

*The seemingly mundane events of the Vedabbha Jātaka correspond with the 16 stages of Vipassana towards liberation. The mastery of Vedabbha Charm is like the upakkilesa (higher defilement) in the Vipassana stage of Udayabbaya (Rising-Falling). This stage rains immediate benefits like treasures to a meditator. However, he needs to be careful of these rewards because the rewards are a hindrance to entering the path of the noble. This insight of “rising-falling” and “cause-effect” is still tainted and should be purified with the knowledge of conditionality. Understanding conditionality means comprehending that all forms of conditionality cannot be created or destroyed*
The Quality of Non-Conclusivity

but can be transformed into different forms of relative consequential consequences. This will eventually kill off the idea of “self”.

It is possible to view the robbers as representing the mass of self which is a dependently arisen phenomena. The slaying of the 998 robbers represents the dismantling of the more common deluded concept of “others” and progressively, the subsequent deaths of the last two robbers: by the robber poisoning the food of the other robber and the latter killing the former symbolises the unconditioning of the most deceptive concept of “I” and “you”.

Thus, the whole progressive contemplative path towards Nibbāna is hidden in the most mundane massacre scene.

Finally, the future Buddha’s equanimity in witnessing the carnage portrays the equipoise of sankharupekkha ñāna (the state of equilibrium towards all conditionality) towards all phenomena, the apex of the 16 stages of Vipassana. Thereafter, the future Buddha with this perfect equanimous state lived happily sharing the abandoned treasures with many sentient beings. …..And to this day, he continues to share with us his greatest treasure, the supreme charm of Dependent Origination that surpasses all.
CHAPTER THREE

THE QUALITY OF NECESSITY
Chapter 3

THE QUALITY OF NECESSITY

4. DUMMEDHA JĀTAKA (NO.50)
Wise Trickery Transforms Fools

Listen

The Buddha told this story while at Jetavana Monastery.

A long time ago, in Benares the future Buddha was reborn as a prince called Brahmadatta. Prince Brahmadatta was learned in the three Vedas and had excelled in the eighteen branches of knowledges. Due to his outstanding performance, his father, the king, appointed him as the Governor of Benares.

Whilst in Benares, the prince noticed that the people there were inclined towards festivals of worshipping gods. During those festivals, besides flowers and perfumes, large numbers of gory carcasses of sacrificed animals were offered to the gods. The prince witnessed how lives were wantonly sacrificed out of superstition and almost to the point of irreligion.

Motivated by compassion for the people who indulged in killing and the animals that were being sacrificed, the prince made a wish that should he succeed as the king, he would find a harmless way to stop such practices. With that in mind, he mounted his chariot and drove out of the city of Benares. On his way out, he saw a crowd gathered at a holy banyan tree. They were praying to the fairy residing in that tree to be blessed with sons and daughters, honour and wealth and so forth. The prince alighted from his chariot,
approached the tree, and behaved as a worshipper only to the extent of making offerings of perfumes and flowers, sprinkling the tree with water and circumambulating the tree. Then, he got onto his chariot and went back to the city. From time to time, the prince made such repeated journeys and worshipped it like a true believer in ‘gods’.

When his father died, Prince Brahmadatta ascended the throne. As the ruler, he avoided the four evil courses, observed the ten royal virtues and ruled his people in righteousness. He then remembered his former resolve and felt that it was time to fulfil it. Summoning all his ministers, the religious leaders, the nobles and the other people of all ranks, he then asked them, “Do you know how I made myself the king?” His question went unanswered. He also asked if anyone had seen him reverently worshipping the banyan tree with perfumes and the like and bowing before it. To this, they said “Sire, we have”.

Next, he told them that he had made a vow before the tree. His vow was that should he become king, he would offer a sacrifice to that tree and now it was time to offer his promised sacrifice. He ordered that the sacrifice be prepared immediately. His subjects asked “Of what are we to make the offering, Sire?” “My vow”, said the king, “was this: All such as are addicted to the five sins such as those who slaughter living creatures and the like, and all those who walk in the ten paths of unrighteousness, their flesh and blood together with their entrails and vitals will be made as offering.” He then said, “Proclaim my vow through beat of drum that I, the king, had since my days as the governor vowed that should I become king, I would kill and offer up in a sacrifice, all such of my people who break the precepts.”

He further made a proclamation, “Let this be known throughout the city. The king will slay one thousand persons who are addicted to the five sins or walk in the ten paths of
unrighteousness and offering shall be made with the hearts and flesh of the thousand in honour of the god. Declare in my name that anyone who transgresses after this date, a thousand will be slayed and offered as a sacrifice to the god in discharge of my vow.”

And to make his meaning clear, the king uttered this stanza:

“A thousand evil-doers once I vowed in pious gratitude to kill;
And evil-doers form so huge a crowd,
That I will fulfil my vow now.”

Obedient to the king’s commands, the ministers had the proclamation made accordingly throughout the length and breadth of Benares. Such was the effect of the proclamation on the townsfolk that not a soul persisted in the old inhumane practices. And throughout the king’s reign not a man was convicted of transgressing.

Thus, without harming any of his subjects, the king had made them observe the precepts. At the close of a life of alms-giving and other good works, he passed away with his followers to be reborn in the heavenly realms.

The Buddha’s disciples were the ministers of those days while the Buddha was the Prince Brahmadatta who became the king.

Contemplate

In this Jātaka tale, the future Buddha with full understanding of the necessity quality of Dependent Origination, used necessary evil to subjugate the evil inclinations of his subjects and to save lives.

The future Buddha manipulated the misguided ignorance of his subjects to skilfully stop them from blindly indulging
in sacrificial rites of senseless killings by his empty threats of death. This was necessary to stop them from succumbing to the wrong ancient tradition that preyed on the fears of the people.

“Now, Kalamas, don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher.’ When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are skilful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when adopted and carried out, lead to welfare and to happiness’ — then you should enter and remain in them.”

Kalama Sutta illustrates that we should not succumb to our insecurities through the convenient deceptive solution of an all preconceived higher power: by reports, legends, traditions, scripture, logical conjecture, inference, analogies, agreement through pondering views, probability, or the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher’.

“God did not make man, man make gods”

The future Buddha, who saw the conditionality of the fear of his subjects, had skilfully used empty threats to save lives. Finally, misguided fear has to be successfully cornered to be transformed into empathetic compassion towards all living beings.

Meditate

With great compassion,
the future Buddha navigated in all ways
to awaken different kinds of sentient beings.
Solely driven by the seed of
Mahā Karunā (Great Compassion),

15 Anguttara Nikāya 3.65 Kesaputtiya (Kalama) Sutta Translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu
he turned the fear of people into
great potential chariots of awakening,
even at the risk of tainting his pure virtue.
He acted like a politician who manipulated
the psychological fear and ignorance of the common folks.
He laid a policy that eventually saved them from
their cruel animal sacrificial rites to appease the gods.

With guarded awareness and mindfulness,
the future Buddha manipulated
the ignorant public mentality to awaken them.
He did not ignorantly consider himself more powerful
than gods or had transferred their supposed power
to himself as a leader.
Instead, the future Buddha eventually transformed
his own equipoise towards all conditionalities
into a higher aspiration of serving all sentient beings,
with the perfect respect for all conditionalities,
by honest and deceptive expedient means.
Hence, he was not trapped in indifference
towards all conditionalities.

If one does not use skilful ways and means
to accomplish the task of saving all sentient beings,
then, where is the great compassion amongst all virtue?
If one forgets that the crucial intention behind all these tasks
is to become the master of all conditionalities, only to awake,
where is the great omniscience amongst all wisdom?
The Buddha told this story while residing in Bamboo Grove.

Once upon a time, King Brahmadatta of Benares had a son who grew up to be a very cruel and wicked man. He was always quick tempered and people inside and outside the palace avoided him like the plague. One day, the prince decided to go swimming in the river with his servants and attendants. Suddenly, the sky turned dark and gloomy and a great storm broke. Eager to show that he was a courageous person, he yelled at his servants to take him into the river and bathe him before bringing him back to the shore again. Following his orders, the servants took the prince out to midstream. “This is our chance! Let’s kill the evil prince. Whatever we do here, the king will never find out,” they whispered to one another. “Into the flood waters you go, you good-for-nothing!” With that, they threw the prince into the stormy river and he was swept along by the raging waters. Fortunately, he was able to grab hold of a floating dead log which he clung onto for his dear life.

Now, a very rich man had just died in Benares. He had buried his treasure trove of forty million gold coins in the riverbank along the same stretch of river. Due to his miserly ways and attachment to wealth, he was reborn as a snake at the same spot where he had buried his treasure to guard it. Similarly, at a nearby spot on the same riverbank, another rich miser had also stashed away a treasure of thirty million gold coins. Likewise, due to his stinginess and craving for money, he had been reborn as a water rat at that exact same place to watch over the gold. When the river
water rose, both the snake and the water rat were flooded out of their holes and swept into the raging river. Like the prince, they both happened to grasp on to the same dead log that was carrying the frightened, wailing prince. The snake climbed up on one end and the water rat on the other.

At that moment, a young parrot was washed up onto the same dead log. This parrot had been roosting in a tall cotton tree that grew nearby the river. However, when the rainstorm came, the cotton tree was uprooted and the little parrot fell into the water. The heavy rain and the strong winds hampered the parrot when it tried to fly.

So these four floated downstream together upon the log, towards a bend in the river. A holy man happened to be living humbly in a little hut nearby. This holy man was the future Buddha. When the log floated pass the holy man’s hut at midnight, he heard the panicked shrieks of the evil prince. “I will not let this poor frightened human being perish before my eyes. I must rescue him from the water and save his life. Don’t be afraid! I will save you!” he shouted as he ran down the river and jumped into the rushing torrent. With great strength and effort, he grabbed the log and pulled it safely to shore.

When the holy man noticed the poor wet animals, he brought all three animals and the prince into his cosy little hut. He started a small fire and thinking that the animals being weaker were in greater need, warmed them first before allowing the prince to warm himself. Next, the holy man gave out some fruits and nuts. Again, he fed the more helpless animals before attending to the waiting prince. Not surprisingly, this made the evil prince furious. “How dare this holy man value these dumb animals more highly than me, a great royal prince!” he thought angrily. As a result of this thinking, he nursed a bitter grudge against his saviour.

A few days later, all four had recovered their strength and the waters had subsided. It was time for them to leave. The
snake approached the gentle future Buddha to say goodbye first. It bowed its head respectfully and said, “Venerable one, I am grateful to you for saving my life. I have buried a treasure of forty million gold coins in a certain place. To repay your kindness to me, I will gladly give it to you for all lives are priceless! Whenever you are in need of money, just come down to the riverbank and look for me by calling out, ‘Snake! Snake!’” The water rat was next to bade the holy man farewell. It bowed its head respectfully and said, “Venerable one, I cannot thank you enough for saving my life. I, too, have buried a treasure of thirty million gold coins in a certain place. To repay your kindness, I will also gladly give it to you for all lives are priceless! Whenever you are in need of money, just look for me at the riverbank by calling out, ‘Rat! Rat!’” The depth of gratitude and generosity shown by the snake and the water rat was a far cry from their previous stingy human lives!

Then, came the parrot’s turn to say goodbye to the holy man. It bowed its head respectfully and said, “Venerable one, I am grateful to you for saving my life, but I do not possess any silver or gold. However, if you are ever in need of the finest rice, just look for me at the riverbank by calling out, ‘Parrot! Parrot!’ With the help of my relatives from all the forests of Himalayas, we will bring you cart-loads of the most precious fragrant rice, for all lives are priceless!”

The evil prince was the last to take his leave. As his mind was bent on avenging the insults he thought he received from the holy man, he was far from feeling grateful to him for saving his life. In fact, he thought only about killing the holy man. But he masked his true intent and said, “Venerable one, please come to me when I’m the king and I will provide you with the four necessities - food, clothing, shelter and medicine.” With that, he returned to Benares and was soon crowned as the new king.

Later, the holy man decided to check if the gratitude of these four was real. So, he went down to the riverbank and
called out “Snake! Snake!” At the sound of the first word, the snake slithered out of its home under the ground. It bowed respectfully and said, “Holy one, under this very spot lay forty million gold coins. Dig them up and take them with you!” “Very well,” replied the holy man, “When I am in need, I will come again.” Saying goodbye to the snake, he walked along the riverbank to where the rat lived, and called out “Rat! Rat!” The water rat appeared and just like the snake, it too showed the spot where his treasure lay and offered his hoard to the holy man. Next, he called out “Parrot! Parrot!” The parrot flew down from its home at the top of the tree, bowed respectfully and said, “Holy one, do you need fine fragrant rice? I will summon my relatives and we will bring you the best rice in all of Himalayas.” The holy man replied, “Very well, when I am in need, I will come again.”

Finally, he set out to see the king. In a very humble and dignified manner, he went to collect alms in the city of Benares. On that same morning, the ungrateful king, happened to be leading a vast procession around the city, seated on a magnificently adorned royal elephant. When he saw the future Buddha coming towards him from a distance, he thought, “Aha! This lazy homeless bum is coming to sponge off me. Before he can brag to everyone how much he did for me, I must have him beheaded!” So the king ordered, “This worthless beggar must be coming to ask for something. Don’t let the lazy good for nothing get near me. Arrest him immediately, tie his hands behind his back and whip him at every street corner. Take him out of the city and have him executed.” The king’s men followed his cruel orders. They tied up the innocent holy man and whipped him mercilessly at every street corner on the way to the execution place. But no matter how hard the whip cut into his flesh, the future Buddha remained dignified. After each slash of the whip, he simply exclaimed, for all to hear, “This proves that the old saying is still true ‘A log pays better salvage than some men’.”
Some of the onlookers began to wonder why he said that at each street corner. “This poor man’s pain must have been caused by an ungrateful man,” they said to one other. “Oh holy man, how have you helped an ungrateful man?” they asked. Then he told them the whole story and in conclusion, he said, “I rescued this king from a terrible flood and in doing so, I brought this pain upon myself for I did not follow the saying of the wise and the old. That’s why I repeatedly say ‘It pays to pull logs from a river than to help an ungrateful man.’”

After hearing this story, the people of Benares became enraged. “This good man saved the king’s life, but instead of repaying his kindness, he has treated him so cruelly. How can such an ingrate possibly be a good king? He can only be dangerous to us. Let’s overthrow him!” Rage turned the citizens of Benares into a mob. They pelted the king as he rode on his royal elephant with arrows, knives, clubs and stones, thus, killing him. Then, they made the holy man their new king and he ruled Benares in righteousness.

In that life, Devadatta was the wicked king, Sāriputta was the snake, Moggallāna was the rat, Ānanda was the parrot and the Buddha was the righteous holy man who won a kingdom.

Contemplate

The future Buddha with an uncompromising stance, had indirectly led a rebellion against a deviated governance, conquering a sovereignty that self-corrupts. The rebellion was dependently a condition to win a true kingdom. Eventually, he became a great king who not only ruled the country but was sovereign over self and all.

Every person possesses the powerful force that can create his own karmic destiny even as great as a king. As in this tale, the very force that had empowered Brahmadatta to be
The Quality of Necessity

king had also driven him to be impervious to the attempted assassination by his people at the river. Later, this very same force further blinded him to even lay the most cruel hand towards his own saviour and consequently, caused his death for being a wicked king.

The very quality of Necessity of Dependent Origination warns us to navigate skilfully, abiding to the conditionality of consequential consequences which is the very quintessence of the law of kamma. The merits of every person should be safeguarded by the crown knowledge of Dependent Origination so that enthronement does not lead to dethronement.

Meditate

In the midst of the force of good which co-arises with evil,
the future Buddha remained in great equanimity
of all conditionality.
While he was able to save the snake, the rat, the parrot
and the prince from the great flood,
they had to individually save themselves.
The prince’s (the past Devadatta) merits was far greater than the
snake (the past Sāriputta),
the rat (the past Moggallāna)
and the parrot (the past Ānanda).
However, each of them had to be tested individually
by the future Buddha.
The miserly snake, the stingy water rat and the thrifty parrot
all passed their test. Surprisingly, the prince,
who had the most merits to be born as a prince,
treated the benefactor most ungratefully.
He even went to the extent of ordering the sage
to be whipped to death.
He was consumed by his own past merits
due to his pride of his royal birth.
5. Saccamkira Jātaka (No.73)

Departing from the common Buddhist emphasis on the importance of merits, without the knowledge of Dependent Origination merits which crown you as a king, will also cause your downfall. From being a practising ascetic, the future Buddha conveniently assumed the role of a king to fulfil the will of the people. This enthroned him not only as a new king but also portrayed the victory of conditionality over merits.
6. DUTA JĀTAKA (NO. 260)  
*Lust Free Enjoyment, Most Exquisite*

Listen

The Buddha told this story to a monk who was addicted to covetousness while He was staying in Jetavana Monastery.

Once the future Buddha was King of Benares. He was very dainty as to food and spent so much on it that he came to be known as Bhojanasuddhika (Dainty food). He always ate in a decorated pavilion in full view of his subjects.

One day, a greedy man was passing by. On seeing the king’s sumptuous feast and wishing to taste the food, he rushed up to the ruler with clasped hands, saying that he was a messenger knowing that messengers had free access to the king. Approaching the table, he quickly grabbed some food and thrust it into his mouth. The king’s attendants seized the man and wanted to behead him but the good king invited him to share his meal instead.

At the conclusion, the king inquired as to the man’s message. He said he was the messenger of Lust and of the Belly and told the king how great were the power of these two. The king was pleased with him and bestowed on him one thousand cows.

When the Buddha ended the discourse, he identified the covetous monk as the greedy man in the past and He himself was the King of Benares. On hearing the discourse, the monk attained the third stage of sainthood and many others were also enlightened.

Contemplate

As a king who was outwardly a connoisseur of fine cuisine, the future Buddha showed the *necessity* of *Dependent*
Origination by a display of appreciating the enjoyments of life, untainted by desire and not overpowered by lust. He employed mundane enjoyments to lure and captivate sentient beings in order to align a specific kind of audience towards awakening. This particular group of beings could only be taught by the skilful means unique to a Sammā Sambuddha. Incidentally, even the most powerful skilful means of His Chief Disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna may not be effective in shocking them out of their extreme lustful tendencies.

Meditate

The enjoyment of food and being a lustful slave for it, like an advocate for one’s belly, is a constant thorn to mundane people.

The future Buddha, known as Bhojanasuddhika (Dainty food), who always ate in a decorated pavilion in full view of his subjects, had turned the most mundane activity into the great unfolding of life as though there is nothing but a celebration of life.

Sing like no one is listening.
Love like you’ve never been hurt.
Dance like nobody’s watching, and live like it’s heaven on earth.

The greatest enjoyment of life for the future Buddha was elevated to include everyone, even his covetous subject who daringly pursued what he desired even at the expense of being executed.
This shows that no matter how noble the greatest enjoyment is,
it is still tainted by self. With the recognition that one’s own enjoyment of life is even tainted by the exclusiveness of solitude, one witnesses the real celebration of life. This is the undeniable truth of life that has the greatest forgiving heart. It forgives the greatest sin of “self-desire” as all is but a great play of conditionality. This great play was exemplified by the magnificently decorated pavilion in view of all sentient beings and the subjects! This is the taste of life, the playground of the future Buddha and all his related sentient beings to finally awaken to reality! By fully transforming desire to total none desire, an Anagami is born!
CHAPTER FOUR

THE QUALITY OF INVARIABILITY OF CHANGE
Once at the Jetavana Monastery, the Buddha told this story to a monk who still hankered for the wife he had left behind.

A long time ago, the future Buddha was a notorious robber who was bold and as strong as an elephant. He was elusive and could not be caught. As a last resort, the king offered a reward for his capture. Finally, the robber was apprehended and the king ordered the governor to behead the prisoner.

As the robber was being led along the street to the execution place, a famous courtesan named Sāmā spotted him. Outstandingly handsome, comely and gracious to behold, with a god-like appearance, Sāmā instantly fell in love with the robber. She conceived of a plan to rescue and marry him. Sāmā sent one of her maids to present to the governor one thousand pieces of money. She told him that the robber was her brother and requested the governor to let him escape. The governor said to the maid, “Due to the notoriety of the robber, I cannot let him go. But if you send me a substitute, I can deliver your man to you in a covered carriage.” Upon hearing the governor’s reply, Sāmā devised another plan. She knew a wealthy young merchant who was extremely infatuated with her. This young merchant presented her with one thousand pieces of money every evening whenever he visited her.
That very evening, when the young merchant arrived as usual with one thousand pieces of money, Sāmā pretended to weep, telling the young merchant, “The notorious robber is my brother and the governor has said he will let him go if he were to receive one thousand pieces of money. I can’t find anyone to take the money to the governor.” Intoxicated with love for Sāmā, the young merchant agreed to deliver the money. Upon receiving the money, the governor quickly abducted the young merchant and hid him in a secret place. Next, he sent the robber in a closed carriage to Sāmā. He waited till night-time when everyone had retired to rest before executing the young merchant.

Thereafter, Sāmā stopped entertaining other men and devoted all her time and attention to the handsome robber. Then, the robber thought to himself, “If this treacherous woman should fall in love with someone else, she will also have me killed so that she can make love with him. I mustn’t stay any longer. I must quickly escape.” Planning his escape, he thought, “I mustn’t go empty-handed but should take some of her jewellery with me.” So the robber told Sāmā, “My dear, we have been staying indoors for so long. Let’s go for a picnic in the garden.” Sāmā readily agreed. She prepared sumptuous food, adorned herself with jewellery and set off with the robber to the garden in a carriage.

Cavorting in the garden, pretending to show extreme affection for Sāmā, the robber hugged her so tightly that she passed out. He then relieved her of her jewellery and ran away. Having regained consciousness, Sāmā asked her attendants, “Where is my husband?” As her attendants did not know, Sāmā thought her husband must have run away thinking that he had accidentally killed her. Extremely distressed, she returned home.

Resolving to find him, Sāmā employed some travelling actors, telling them, “Please sing these stanzas to the crowd at every place that you perform. My husband will answer and
you’ll then bring him back to me. If he refuses to return, please let me know.” When the travelling actors arrived at a border village where the robber was living, they sang the stanzas.

“In the joyous time of spring,
With trees and shrubs brightly flowering,
From her fainting, Sāmā has awakened,
Now Sāmā lives and lives for you only.”

Hearing the stanza saying that Sāmā was alive and pined for him, the robber approached the actors with the following stanza:

“Can fierce winds shake a mountain?
Can they make the firm earth quake?
How can the dead be alive?
It would be a miracle!”

The actors replied with this stanza:

“Sāmā is surely not dead;
She would also not wed another man;
She is secluding herself from all but one;
She loves you and only you.”

On hearing the actors, the robber replied with this stanza,

“Sāmā’s fancy is ever changing;
Casting off faithful lover for new love;
Sāmā would also betray me;
If I did not flee away.”

In that birth, the monk was the young merchant who was executed. The wife that the monk had left was Sāmā. The Buddha was the robber. At the end of the discourse, the monk attained first stage of sainthood.
Contemplate

Understanding the invariability of change, the future Buddha who knew how the courtesan had betrayed her former faithful lover, foresaw that one day, she could similarly destroy him and refused to be blinded by her fleeting devotion. He had the vigilance to avoid the danger of the fickle and destructive nature of lust that captivates the heart.

Whether it is with or without Sāmā, the spell of passion and desire in this conditionality is the most powerful rejuvenating force but this force could equally consume the future Buddha (victim) and ultimately, Sāmā (the master). Consequently, the future Buddha had to flee within his mirror of conditionalities that removes the ideas of “for me” or “not for me”.

“…… conditioned by ignorance are kammic impulses…… this law of conditionality is called the principle of Dependent Origination.”

The future Buddha wisely understood the kammic destructive actions of those enamoured by lust tainted by ignorance to the extent that he even escaped from his beautiful saviour. Thus, he conquered the Samsaric force of lust.

By knowing that kammic impulses are always tainted with the ignorance of self-deception like an eternal shadow, we will not be entrapped by the kammic impulses, thus, allowing many possibilities to unfold.

Meditate

The daring trickery by the beautiful courtesan to timely save the life of a notorious handsome robber was a twist in a never ending infatuation.

This provided a chance for the future Buddha

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to conquer and overcome one of the greatest burden— that of gratitude.

Torn between lust, gratitude and sentiments of a relationship, playing with the most dangerous pairing of a cunning courtesan and an uncommon brave robber, the future Buddha chose to be a “coward” by running away ungratefully.

Instead of being lured into the prison of family life he chose to escape not only from her but also from all sentient being’s infatuation with the samsaric scene of pure beauty and desire.

The forgiving heart of the courtesan, who was enamoured with the future Buddha encountered a totally unexpected response from the future Buddha.

He hesitated with worry and despair to escape from her enslaving palace of ignorant bliss that had captivated many men with the most enticing scene which nevertheless softly kills.

Trust not the trusted; nor the untrusted trust; Trust kills; through trust a man bit the dust.

The devoted Sāmā had even caused one man to be beheaded. This provided an opportunity for the future Buddha to witness desire tinted with lust which commonly enslaves all of us.

The continuous maze of gratitude and unforgiving betrayal, breach of trust and clinging on to a sanctuary of life, is a challenge and trial for mental cultivation and ultimately, is not a refuge.
Samsāra is often mistaken as our refuge home
but it is only a theatre for mental cultivation to transcend
in order to attain the ultimate bliss of Nibbāna.
All passion released, all tasks are accomplished,
the great liberation from Samsāra is earned!
8. SATAPATTA JĀTAKA (NO. 279)
Ally Or Foe, It Depends?

Listen

When the Buddha was in Jetavana Monastery, the Buddha told this story while admonishing several incorrigible monks.

In a previous life, the future Buddha was the chief of five hundred robbers, who lived by highway robbery and housebreaking. At that time, there was a landowner who had lent someone a thousand pieces of money but died before being repaid. Later, when his wife laid dying, she asked her son to collect the debt before her last breath.

The son managed to collect the debt but his mother passed away before he could arrive home. She loved him so much that she suddenly reappeared in the form of a jackal on the road on which he was travelling. The road led to some woods where the robber chief and his band of men laid in wait to rob unsuspecting travellers.

When the son arrived at the entrance of the woods, the jackal, his mother, tried repeatedly to stop him. She entreated him, “My son, don’t enter the woods! There are robbers there who will kill you and take your money!” But her son could not understand her. Instead, he thought, “This is bad luck, having a jackal trying to stop my way.”

He chased the jackal away with sticks and clods of earth and proceeded to enter the woods. Meanwhile, a crane flew towards the band of robbers, crying out, “Here’s a man with a thousand pieces on him. Kill him and take them!” Not knowing what the crane was doing, the son thought, “A lucky bird! There’s a good omen for me!” He saluted the bird, crying respectfully, “Say more, say more, my lord!”
The future Buddha, who knew the meaning of all sounds, realised the crane was the man’s enemy. “This man is a fool for driving away his mother who wished for his welfare while worshipping the crane who wished him ill!” In the woods, the robbers waylaid the son. The future Buddha told the youth of his foolishness and refused to take his money, saying, “Keep your money and be off!”

Contemplate

Just as in a past life, when the future Buddha chided a man who drove away his mother who wished for his welfare and worshipped a crane which wished him ill, so the Buddha conquered the monks’ haughty mind born of ignorance.

Every phenomena is formed from myriad contradicting or complementing conditions. Due to invariability of change, the seemingly bad luck jackal was apparently his loving mother while the beautiful crane was apparently his past wicked enemy.

The future Buddha, without discrimination, clearly differentiated between friend and foe within the confusingly complex net of conditionality. He helped the man to see beyond the superficial idea that a friend must appear as a helpful person whereas a foe must be of an intimidating appearance.

Invariability of change - conditions change continuously. An enemy can become a friend and so, can a friend become an enemy. Each person is but a synthesis of countless opposing conditions. The perplexed man in the tale was trapped and conditioned by his deluded kammic perception. This caused him to fail to differentiate between a friend and a foe.
Complicated kammic consequences or simply, consequential consequences is the most unfathomable Samsaric phenomena that non-deceptively outsmarts our powerful manipulative minds which deludedly imagine that we are masters of our own lives.

In this Jātaka tale, a dying mother, who urged the son to collect a debt, had died prematurely and was trapped to appear as a jackal, was perceived as an enemy by her naive son. The anxious son who had successfully collected the debt now had to face two ripening kammic scenarios: one possible but weak meritorious encounter guided by his mother; the other heavier demeritorious encounter, conjured by the crane, had mistakenly chosen the wrong route of salvation.

To ask a normal uncultivated man to fully honour his promises and responsibilities is somehow a dilemmatic challenge because human survival instinct is capable of all forms of trickery to escape the supposed responsibilities and indebtedness. This has to be repaid by consequential consequences in future lives.

Rebirth erases all memory and unmistakably convince us to believe that it is the right choice to trust the “cranes” in our lives.

Bound by self-preservation, and forced by circumstances, we avoid our due responsibilities with justifications and plays of trickery. Imminently, we are master and servant to consequential consequences.
To realise this truth is utmost liberating because there is no real victim of total innocence and no real saviour of total sacrifice. We are all owners of “consequential consequences”. Ultimately, the knowledge of conditionality frees us from being caught in the endless cyclic role of “victim and culprit” or “friend and foe”.
9. RUKKHA DHAMMA JĀTAKA (NO. 74)

Solitude Engenders Risk, Multitude Security

Listen

While residing at Jetavana Monastery, the Buddha told this story to the two nations that were quarrelling over water from the River Rohini.

Once upon a time, King Vessavana sent word to all trees, shrubs, bushes and plants, commanding the tree-fairies to each choose out the abode that they preferred. In those days, the future Buddha was born as a tree-fairy in a Sāl-forest in the Himalayas. His advice to his kinsfolk in choosing their home was to avoid trees that stood alone in the open and to take up their abodes all around the abode which he had chosen in that Sāl-forest. Hereon, the wise tree-fairies, following the future Buddha’s advice, took up their quarters round his tree.

But, the foolish ones argued, “Why should we dwell in the forest? Let us seek out places frequented by men and take up our abodes outside villages, towns, or capital cities. For fairies who dwell in such places receive the richest offerings and the greatest worship.” So they left to such areas and took up their abode in certain giant trees which grew in open spaces.

Now one day, a great storm swept across the country. Despite the solitary trees having their roots sunk deep in the soil and that they were the mightiest of trees, their branches snapped, their stems were broken and they themselves were uprooted and tossed to the ground by the storm. But, when the storm broke on the Sāl-forest of intertwined trees, they withstood its fury and remained standing firm and strong.

The forlorn fairies whose dwellings were destroyed, took their families and returned to the Himalayas. There they told their sorrows to the fairies of the Sāl-forest, who in turn reported to the future Buddha of their sad plight. He uttered,
“It was because they did not listen to the words of wisdom, that they have been brought to this.” and unfolded the truth by saying:

“United, forest-like, should kinsfolk stand; The storm overthrows the solitary tree.”

So spoke the future Buddha and when his life was spent, he passed away to fare according to his deserts.

And the Buddha went on to say to the warring factions, “Thus, sire, reflect how it is important that kinsfolk at any rate should stand united and peacefully dwell together in concord and unity.” His lesson ended, the Buddha identified the birth by saying that His followers were the fairies of those days and He was the wise fairy.

Contemplate

In this Jātaka tale, the future Buddha demonstrated the necessity of living according to the law of interdependency with due respect to invariability of change. Understanding these principles, one sees beyond individual convenience and experience greater benefit and security by considering and living harmoniously with others. By going beyond “self-importance”, the tree spirits living around the future Buddha managed to withstand the great destruction of the untimely storm.

Ultimately, the invariability of change is that all conditions are impermanent. Hence, a person can never remove the prevalent feeling of uncertainty. When he sees impermanence clearly as a mirror of life, he weighs all the myriad conditions and will not be lured into a deceptive inconclusive advantage.
Meditate

In Rukkha Dhamma Jātaka,
the future Buddha, a far-sighted chief tree spirit,
advised his fellow spirits:
“Shun those trees that stood alone in the open.
Live in interlacing trees within the forest,
even at the expense of not receiving worship and rich offerings”.

This proved beneficial as it eventually saved them
from great destruction by a mighty storm.
“United, interrelated and intertwined like a forest”
symbolises living within the knowledge of conditionality.
Conversely, “residing in a solitary tree with plenty of offerings”
symbolises living by relying on
one’s own primal survival instinct.

Thus, conveying the powerful universal truth that
one should not be easily bought over by short-term gratification
but live within the knowledge of symbiotic conditionality,
the synergy of clusters of togetherness and friendliness
which exponentially opens up the boundless macrocosm
that verily helps all to withstand the vicissitudes of life.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE QUALITY OF CONDITIONALITY
Chapter 5

THE QUALITY OF CONDITIONALITY

10. GHATA-JĀTAKA (NO. 454)
Bonded Tightly By History, Unravels Hallucinations

Listen

The Buddha told this story to a layman about his son’s death while residing in Jetavana Monastery.

A long time ago, a king named Mahākamsa reigned in Uttarāpatha. He had two sons named Kamsa and Upakamsa, and one daughter named Devagabbhā. On her birthday, the brahmins predicted her future: “A son born of this girl will one day destroy the country and the lineage of Kamsa (the crown prince).” But the king loved the girl dearly and could not bear to put her to death. Leaving her two brothers to settle it, the king lived his days out and then died.

Now, Devagabbhā had a female servant named Nandagopā. The woman’s husband, Andhakavenhu, was also her servant. Upasāgara, a viceroy of neighbouring country fell in love with Devagabbhā and she returned his love. One night, Nandagopā arranged a tryst and brought Upasāgara up into the tower. He stayed there with Devagabbhā. By their constant intercourse, Devagabbhā conceived. Soon it became known that she was pregnant and the brothers questioned Nandagopā.

When they heard the story, they thought, “We cannot put our sister to death. If she bears a daughter, we will spare the baby; if a son, we will kill him.” They gave Devagabbhā to Upasāgara as wife. When the time came, she gave birth to a
daughter. On receiving this news, the brothers were delighted and gave her the name of the Lady Añjanā. Devagabbhā conceived again and that very day Nandagopā became pregnant also. When they were due for delivery, they gave birth on the same day; Devagabhā, a son and Nandagopā, a daughter. Devagabhā, fearing that her son might be put to death, sent him secretly to Nandagopā and received Nandagopā’s daughter in return. In the same manner, Devagabhā bore ten sons and Nandagopā ten daughters. The eldest son was named Vāsudeva and the future Buddha was born as the ninth son named Ghata-pandita. The sons lived with Nandagopā whereas the daughters with Devagabhā and not a soul knew the secret.

In the course of time, the sons grew big and were very strong, fierce and ferocious. Known as the Ten Slave Brethren, they went about plundering. They even went so far as to steal a present being conveyed to their uncle, the king. The king set up a match with two wrestlers to kill them but the ten brothers overcame the wrestlers and after the match, killed both their uncles, the king and viceroy. Thus, the Ten Brethren, assumed the sovereignty of the city of Asitañjanā. Next, they set out intending to conquer all of India and eventually succeeded in achieving their goal. They slayed all the kings in sixty three thousand cities and ruled from Dvāravaṭī.

The brothers had many sons and daughters. Then, one very beloved son of the great King Vāsudeva died. The king, half dead with grief, neglected everything and lay lamenting. The ninth brother, Ghata-pandita, who is the future Buddha thought to himself, “No one else except me is able to ease my brother’s grief. I will find some means to soothe him.” So pretending to be mad, he paced through the whole city, gazing up at the sky and crying out, “Give me a hare! Give me a hare!” All the city was excited: “Ghata-pandita has gone mad!” they exclaimed. Hearing the news of Ghata-pandita’s
insanity from a courtier named Rohineyya, the king arose and quickly descended from his chamber and proceeding to Ghata-pandita, he uttered the following stanza:

“In maniac fashion, why do you pace all through Dvāraka and cry, “Hare, hare!” Say, who has taken a hare from you?”

To the utterances of the king, Ghata-pandita only answered by repeating the same cry over and over again. Then the king recited two more stanzas:

“Be it of gold, or made of jewels fine,
Or brass, or silver, as you may incline,
shell, stone, or coral, I declare I’ll make a hare.”

“And many other hares there be,
that range the woodland wide,
they shall be brought, I’ll have them caught;
say, which do you decide?”

On hearing the king’s words, the future Buddha replied by repeating this stanza:

“I crave no hare of earthly kind, but that within the moon
O bring him down, O Kesava! I ask no other boon!”

“Undoubtedly my brother has gone mad,” thought the king, when he heard this. In great grief, he uttered this stanza:

“In sooth, my brother, you will die,
if you make such a prayer,
And ask for what no man may pray,
the moon’s celestial hare.”

Ghata-pandita, on hearing the king’s answer, stood still and said, “My brother, you know that if a man prays for the hare in the moon and cannot get it, he will die; then why do you mourn for your dead son? If, brother, this you know and can console another’s woe, why are you still mourning the son who died so long ago?”
Then he went on —"And I, brother, pray only for what exists but you are mourning for what does not exist." Then he instructed him by speaking two more stanzas:

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‘My son is born, let him not die!  
No man nor deity can have that boon;  
then wherefore pray for what can never be?’
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No mystic charm, nor magic roots,  
nor herbs, nor money spent,  
can bring to life again that ghost whom you lament.’
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The king, on hearing this, answered, “Your intent was good, dear one. You did it to take away my trouble.” Then, in praise of Ghata-pandita, he uttered the following stanzas:

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Men had I, wise and excellent to give me good advice:  
But how has Ghata-pandita opened this day my eyes!”
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Blazing was I, as when a man pours oil upon a fire;  
You brought water and quenched the pain of my desire.”
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Grief for my son, a cruel shaft was lodged within my heart;  
You have consoled me for my grief and taken out the dart.”
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That dart extracted, free from pain,  
tranquil and calm I keep;  
Hearing, your words of truth,  
no more I grieve nor weep.”
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And lastly:

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Thus do the merciful and thus they who are wise indeed:  
They, free from pain, as Ghata here his eldest brother freed.”
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At that time, Ānanda was Rohineyya, Sāriputta was Vāsudeva, the followers of the Buddha were the other persons and the Buddha was Ghata-pandita. At the end of the discourse, that layman attained the first stage of sainthood.
Contemplate

Although it was seemingly easy to change the non-conclusive conclusion that the sons of Devagabbhā would destroy the lineage of Kamsa, conditionally, it turned out to be otherwise. The love of the king for his daughter and subsequently, the love of the brothers for their sister coupled with the servant’s interventions and the series of uncanny events that followed, conditionally, made the prophecy come true.

The very act of reading the prophecy to safeguard the Kamsa Kingdom was the very necessary catalyst to ripen the enemies’ kamma to hasten the demise of the kingdom. The ten brethren conditionally became so united and powerful due to the traumatic realisation of the hardship borne by so many involved in protecting their lives. This is the enormous inconclusive interventive hand of kamma that is beyond the grasp of human comprehension.

Having used his powerful self to conquer thousands of kingdoms, resulted in the necessary backlash that King Vasudeva was not able to conquer himself. When his son died, King Vasudeva was trapped in his own memory of his son. Conditionally, the future Buddha had used all his knowledge and love for the king to help rescue him from his hallucination so that the king could finally conquer himself. The future Buddha saved the king by the act of lunacy. This ability of the future Buddha to shake the king out of his delusional grasping to his deceased son was conditionally acquired only by having gone through many perilous battles together with the king and his other brothers.

Meditate

In Ghata Jātaka, the future Buddha fought courageously side by side with his nine brothers,
bound deeply beyond ordinary kinship. This necessarily laid the conditions of a deeply bonded brotherhood that ultimately elevated him to have the prerogative to jolt the grieving king out of his insanity and opened the king’s eyes to see his grief as an unreasonable predicament akin to craving for the hare in the moon.

Then, he conveyed the simple truth: ‘No mystic charm, nor magic, nor magic roots, nor herbs, nor money spent can bring to life again Kanha, the son of King Vasudeva’.

Even if Kanha could be miraculously resurrected, this is incomparable to the miracle of realising the highest wisdom conveyed by the future Buddha - “no real birth, therefore, we never die”.

Seeing the miracle of conditionality is seeing the greatest miracle of all, to realise life and death as one inseparable reality, both, equally created, equally freed, ascertaining one to the realisation of Nibbāna!

The Buddha in relating this past life incident had led a layperson to attain the fruition of Sotāpanna.
The Buddha told this story about a backsliding monk while residing at Jetavana Monastery.

Once upon a time, there lived King Okkāka, ruler of the Malla Kingdom with his queen consort Sīlavatī in the royal city of Kusavātī. With the divine intervention of Lord Sakka, the barren Queen Sīlavatī finally conceived and bore the king two sons. The first-born, named Kusa, was wise but ugly while the second son, named Jayampati, was handsome but a fool. Both boys were raised with great state.

When Kusa turned sixteen, the king wished to hand over the kingdom to him and to see him married. Kusa knew that with his unattractive appearance, a lovely princess would never favour him. She would run away, putting his family and kingdom to shame. Hence, thrice he rejected his parents’ pleas to marry. On the fourth time, feeling that it was not befitting to oppose his parents, he devised a plan.

Kusa obtained gold from the chief goldsmith and fashioned it into a figure of a woman, beautiful beyond words, like a heavenly nymph. He then proclaimed, “When I find a woman like this, I will take her as my wife.”

The queen summoned her councillors, instructed them to place this gold figure, robed in beautiful clothing, in a covered carriage and traverse the length and breadth of the continent, and whatsoever king’s daughter they find with likeness to the image, to present it to that king and say, “King Okkāka will contract a marriage between his prince and your daughter.”

Whichever kingdom they went to, no one had seen such a maiden until they reached the city of Sāgala in the Kingdom of Madda. The King of Madda had eight extraordinarily
beautiful daughters. They were like heavenly nymphs. The eldest and most beautiful was Pabhāvati, whose body streamed forth rays of light like the rising sun.

Pabhāvati had a humpbacked nurse, who cared and served her. One day, the humpbacked nurse, whilst going to fetch water to wash Pabhāvati’s hair, came by the golden figure placed by the Malla councillors at the city’s gate. Thinking her charge was disgracefully standing on the road, the nurse slapped the image. Seeing the commotion, the envoys questioned the nurse and were overjoyed when told that the image was not worth one sixteenth of her foster daughter’s beauty.

The envoys immediately returned to Kusavātī and informed the king and queen. They set forth for the city of Sāgala and upon meeting the King of Madda, they proposed the betrothal of their son and his daughter, which the Madda King accepted.

Seeing the Madda princess’s extraordinary beauty, the wise Queen Sīlavatī knew that should Pabhāvati see her son, she would not stay a single day but would surely run away. So she devised a plan. The queen informed the King of Madda and Pabhāvati that their family custom forbade a wife to see her husband by daylight until she had conceived and to which the princess agreed to follow.

Thence, Kusa was made king and Pabhāvati his queen consort. However, they were not allowed to see each other by day, only at night. A few days passed and longing to see his wife by day, Kusa begged his mother many times. Eventually, the queen mother allowed Kusa to see his wife but under disguise as an elephant-keeper and a horse-stable groom so that he could gaze at his wife while she walked by.

One day, Kusa concealed himself in the lotus-pool in the garden, in which his wife was bathing. No longer able to contain his deception, Kusa jumped out of the water and
grabbed his wife’s hand, saying, “I am King Kusa.” On seeing Kusa’s face, Pabhāvati, thinking that a goblin had caught hold of her hand, fainted. When she woke up, she realised that her husband was hideous. She fled the palace, to return to her father’s kingdom.

King Kusa, however, chose to let her go and decided to win her back by his own power. In truth, his ugliness was due to his past non-virtuous act of angrily taking back his portion of cake that was offered to a Pacceka Buddha by the past Pabhāvati. Then, the past Pabhāvati made another offering to the Pacceka Buddha with the aspiration of not having anything to do with the past Kusa in the future. Seeing the bowl of the Pacceka Buddha illuminating brightly during the offering, the past Kusa reoffered his portion of cake with the aspiration of having Pabhāvati as his wife in the future.

Thus, Kusa left his kingdom and his royal comforts to pursue his wife. In his endeavour to win her back, he did many things that was beneath a king such as becoming a lute player, a potter, a basket weaver, a garland maker and an apprentice to the king’s cook. Each time, he did not appear before her but crafted and created things of beauty and good taste as gifts and offerings to her. Alas, each time Pabhāvati recognised Kusa’s handiwork and was unimpressed. So conceited was she that each time, she became enraged and acted harshly and cruelly rejecting Kusa and his gifts.

This continued for seven months. Unable to see Pabhāvati and failing to win her over, Kusa finally gave up and decided to return to his kingdom. At this moment, realising what was happening, Lord Sakka intervened. He dispatched messages to seven kings separately as if they came from the King of Madda himself, saying, “Pabhāvati has left King Kusa and returned home. You are to come and take her as your wife.”

The seven kings concurrently arrived at the city with their large followings. Upon knowing that the King of Madda had
fooled them all, they threatened him, demanding either he gave Pabhāvati in marriage to all of them or they would fight him. The king, realising this difficult predicament and angry with his daughter for casting off King Kusa, decreed that he would slay her and cut her body into seven pieces to be presented to each of the seven kings.

Hearing this, Pabhāvati became terrified and finally admitted that Kusa, her husband, was with her all the time, living as a cook in the palace. Initially, her parents didn’t believe her but seeing her speak confidently, they summoned the cook. When Kusa saw her coming towards him, he decided that now was the time to break down her pride and made her grovel in the mud to seek his forgiveness.

Hearing her predicament and convinced of her sincerity, King Kusa, having bathed and dressed in kingly finery, mounted a richly caparisoned elephant with Pabhāvati seated behind him and left the city.

As soon as he saw the forces of the enemies, he charged towards them with a lion’s roar, frightening them and capturing all the seven kings. After overcoming them, instead of killing them, he gave his wife’s younger sisters’ hand in marriage to the kings, thus pacifying them and they peacefully returned to their own lands.

At that time, Kusa’s father and mother were members of the royal household of the Sakyan clan. His younger brother was Ānanda. The humpback nurse was Khujjuttarā, Pabhāvati was Yasodhara and King Kusa was the future Buddha.

At the end of the discourse the backsliding monk attained the first stage of sainthood.

**Contemplate**

Due to pride, holding oneself supreme, one becomes blind to the good qualities in others, just as Pabhāvati had fled from
King Kusa due to her narcissistic obsession with her own beauty. The future Buddha in a grand display of non-conclusive conclusion, never settling on any losing situation, finally conquered the most subtle pride of Pabhāvati.

At the same time, the past Yasodhara, referred to as Pabhāvati in this story, had made the aspiration to support the future Buddha, King Kusa, since the meeting with Dipankara Buddha in a remote past. Hence, conditionally, Pabhāvati had to push King Kusa to the maximum limits of human experience. Finally, when the consequential conditionalities came together, all of King Kusa’s struggles were crowned not only by the triumph over Pabhāvati but also his supremacy over all the seven kingdoms.

Meditate

In Kusa Jātaka, the future Buddha was a wise king but was born ugly due to a past misbehaviour towards a Pacceka Buddha. He was immediately deserted by Queen Pabhāvati who saw him as a goblin in her bathing pool. In desperation, he had to skilfully hide behind roles that were beneath a king - as a lute player, a potter, a basket weaver, a garland maker and an apprentice cook in his endeavour to win over Pabhāvati.

In order for King Kusa to win back his beloved queen, Sakka had to intervene by instigating the seven kings to wage war for Pabhāvati’s hand in marriage. Her bewildered father, in desperation, threatened to chop her into seven pieces to appease the kings.
This shocked Pabhāvati out of her pride and obsession with her own beauty, and led her to finally submit to King Kusa with humility. Hence, the triumphant story of the future Buddha reuniting with his beloved queen, together with the avoidance of an imminent bloodbath via political marriages of Pabhāvati’s sisters to the seven kings, to form a powerful alliance, led a backsliding monk to attain the first stage of sainthood during the Buddha’s lifetime.
12. TELAPATTA JĀTAKA (NO. 96)
   Wavering Mind Succumbs, Resolute Mind Triumphs

Listen

In a forest near the town of Desaka, Sumbha country, before teaching a Sutta, the Buddha posed a question to a group of devotees, “Suppose a great crowd of people gathered together shouting, ‘Hail to the most beautiful lady of the land’ repeatedly many times and she is dancing and singing amidst the merry-making. If there is a man fond of life, fearing death, fond of pleasure, scared of pain and if we say to him, “you are to carry this pot of oil, full to the brim, amongst the crowd and the beautiful dancing lady. A man will follow you with a drawn sword and if you spill a drop, he will chop off your head. So would that man, under these circumstances, be careless and simply carry the pot of oil?” “No way!” the devotees replied.

The Buddha then made the meaning clear. The brimming pot of oil typifies a collected state of mind with regards to the body. The lesson is that such mindfulness should be practiced and perfected. A person desirous of practicing right mindfulness concerning the body, should be as careful not to allow his mindfulness to waver as the man in the story was to not spill a drop of oil.

When the devotees heard the teaching and its meaning, they all agreed that it is difficult to pass by with the brimming pot of oil without gazing at the beautiful and charming lady of the land.

The Buddha went on to explain, “It is not difficult at all and is made easy by the one who threatened him with a sword. But it was truly hard for the wise of olden days to preserve their mindfulness, curb their passions and eventually, win a kingdom.”
Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was the King of Benares, the future Buddha was born as the youngest of the king’s one hundred sons. Knowing of his slim chance of becoming king in his father’s kingdom, the future Buddha sought the counsel of the Pacceka Buddhas on his chances of ruling a kingdom.

After a meal offering and with great respect and salutations, he put forth his question. They confirmed that he would never be king in that city. However in Ghandhāra, two thousand leagues away, lies the city of Takkasilā. If the prince could reach that city, in seven days, he would become its king. However, they warned him that the journey would be a perilous one as he had to take a shortcut through a great forest infested with ogres. There, the ogresses manifested villages and dwellings along the route by their magic. They constructed the most luxurious and comfortable canopies, embroidered with stars above and with a luxurious couch within fair curtains of wondrous dyes. In celestial splendour, the ogresses seduced wayfarers with their sweet charm. Those who succumbed to their lust and followed them, were slain even before the first amorous act and eaten while their blood was still warm.

The ogresses ensnared men’s senses, captivating them with their beauty and loveliness, the ear with sweet minstrel, the nostrils with heavenly aromas, the taste with heavenly delights of exquisite savour and the touch of red cushioned couches with divine softness. If the prince could subdue his senses, be strong in his resolve not to look upon them, then on the seventh day, he would become king of the city of Takkasilā.

The prince requested the Pacceka Buddhas for something to keep him safe for his journey and was given a charmed thread and some charmed sand. So, he bade farewell to the Pacceka Buddhas and to his royal parents. He told his household of his quest and forbade anyone to follow him. However, five of his
followers insisted on accompanying him despite the warnings. They promised to be steadfast and not succumb to the dangers.

Unfortunately, this was not to be. The ogresses laid in wait in their villages. One of the five men, the lover of feminine beauty, glanced at the ogresses and being ensnared by their beauty lagged behind the party. Making his excuses to the prince and surrendering to his senses, he forgot the warning. Hence, the lover of beauty was instantly killed. Further along the road, a new pavilion magically appeared, with many beauties singing with diverse instruments. Now, the lover of music stayed behind and was quickly devoured. Next, they came to a bazaar filled with sweet scents and perfumes. Needless to say, the lover of sweet smelling things fell behind and was not seen again. When they had eaten him, they prepared a provision booth full of heavenly exquisite savouries for sale. The gourmet lover fell behind and was eaten up. Then, the ogresses conjured up heavenly soft couches. Here, the lover of comfort fell behind and met his end too.

With only the prince left, one of the ogresses followed him, vowing to devour him for all his stern resolutions. Some woodmen and others who saw her trailing him asked her who the man walking ahead was. She answered, “He is my husband, good sirs.” Then they shouted at the prince exclaiming, “When you have such a sweet young wife, so fair and beautiful, why don’t you walk beside her?” To which prince answered, “She is not my wife but an ogress who had already eaten five of my companions.” She exclaimed, “Alas, sirs! Anger drives men to say their wives are ogresses and ghouls.”

Next, she simulated pregnancy with a child on her hip, following the prince. When everyone asked the same questions about the pair, the prince gave exactly the same answer as he journeyed on.

Finally, the prince reached Takkasilā where he entered a rest house. The ogress changed her appearance and made
the child disappear. Due to the future Buddha’s efficacy and power, she could not enter so she remained on the threshold posing as a divine beauty.

The King of Takkasilā was passing by and became captivated by her beauty. He sent his attendant to find out whether she had a husband. Again the prince gave the same answer and as before, she expressed, “Alas, good sir, anger will drive men to say anything that comes to mind.”

When the king heard the two sides of the story, he sent for the ogress and toured the city with the exquisite beauty beside him. So enamoured was he that he installed her immediately to apartments reserved for the queen consort. While he was enjoying all the full pleasure of her company, she used the most powerful feminine wiles, that of bursting into tears and acting so inconsolable and distraught that the king had to solve her dilemma. She cleverly asked the king to grant her complete power and authority within the palace. Too deeply smitten by her feminine charms, the king granted her every wish.

While the king slept, she went back to the city of ogresses and returned to the palace with the entire crew. She killed the king and devoured him to the bones while the rest did the same to the whole palace, not leaving even a fowl or a dog alive.

The next day, when the people came and found the whole palace strewn with bones with not a single soul alive, they exclaimed, “So the man was right in saying she was not his wife but an ogress. It was so unwise of the king to bring her home as his wife and no doubt, she had assembled other ogresses, devoured everyone and then left.”

Hence, they cleansed the palace thoroughly, sprinkled perfumes, scattered flowers, burning incense and garnishing the floors afresh. The citizens took counsel together and concluded that, “The man who could so master his senses as not so much as to look at an ogress as she followed him
in her divine beauty, is truly a noble and steadfast man, full of wisdom. With such a man as king, it would be well for the whole kingdom. Let us make him our king.”

With all the courtiers and the citizens one-minded in the matter, they went to see the future Buddha, who was standing in the rest house with the charmed sand on his head and the charmed thread twisted round his brow, sword in hand, waiting on the seventh day, to be chosen as king.

He was escorted to the capital, decked with jewels and anointed as the King of Takkasilā. Shunning the four evil paths and following the ten paths of kingly duty, he ruled his kingdom in righteousness. After a life spent in charity and good deeds, he passed away to reap his just rewards.

He identified the birth by saying that His disciples were in those days the king’s courtiers and He himself was the prince that won a kingdom.

Contemplate

As the hundredth prince in line to the throne, the future Buddha displayed the great mastery of *conditionality* and *non-conclusive conclusion* that made him a king in an unlikely kingdom within the inconceivable period of seven days. He showed great astuteness with perfect mindfulness throughout the perilous journey. He was almost but never caught by any of the hallucinating experiences conjured by the seductive ogresses which progressively killed all his companions. Triumphant over the edge of illusive reality of life and death, he is the conqueror of all the temptations conjured by one’s inner struggles, which culminates with the crowning of a king that never fails.
Meditate

In Telapatta Jātaka, the future Buddha showed great ambition to be a king even though a mere prince, one hundredth in line to the throne, yet was unmoved by the temptation of ultimate enjoyments of the five senses, to convey the simple truth: ‘As one carefully bears a pot full to the brim with boiling oil so that none should spill, so does one who travels to foreign lands with his mind governed will be worthy of governing others.’

The future Buddha passed all the five sensual temptations of a man, through clear mindfulness towards all hallucinations of all pervading forms of beauty, sweet minstrel, heavenly odours, exquisite savour and touch of divine softness. Eventually, he became the worthy king of another country without causing carnage.

All his accompanying friends met their end when they succumbed to all forms of temptations appealing to the five senses. Only by seeing through deceptive captivation that plays and manipulates on one’s kindness and virtue, did the future Buddha escape from the entrapment of an ogress disguised as a beautiful, innocent young wife, and then, as an abandoned expectant mother carrying a child on her hip, to triumph over all forms of hallucinating entrapments of Samsāra!
CHAPTER SIX

THE METHOD OF LEARNING OF A MAHAPURISA
While residing in Jetavana Monastery, the Buddha told this story to a monk who gave up persevering.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the future Buddha was born as a thoroughbred Sindh horse and made the king’s warhorse. Once, seven kings surrounded Benares and sent a message to the king, saying, “Either you surrender your kingdom to us or we go to battle.” The king sent for his knight and said to him, “Can you fight the seven kings?” The knight said, “Give me your noble warhorse and then I can fight not seven kings only, but all the kings in India.” The king replied, “My dear knight, take my horse or any other horse that you please and do battle.”

Mounted on the royal steed, the knight made his way out of the city gate and with a lightning charge broke down the first camp, took one king alive and brought him back as a prisoner. Returning to the field, he broke down the second and the third camps and so on until he captured all five kings alive. He had just defeated the sixth camp and captured the sixth king, when the warhorse was badly wounded. Perceiving that the horse was hurt, the knight loosened its mail and set about arming another horse.

“My rider,” thought future Buddha to himself as he laid on his side, “is arming another horse. That other horse will never
be able to break down the seventh camp and capture the seventh king. He will lose all that I have accomplished. This peerless knight will be slain and the king, too, will fall into the hands of the foe. I alone and no other horse, can break down that seventh camp and capture the seventh king.”

So, as he lay there, he called to the knight and said, “Sir Knight, there is no horse but I who can break down the seventh camp and capture the seventh king. I will not throw away what I have already accomplished. Set me upon my feet and clad me again in my armour.” The knight had the future Buddha set upon his feet, bandaged his wound and armed him again. Mounted on the royal warhorse, he broke down the seventh camp and brought back alive the seventh king whom he handed over to the custody of the soldiers. They also led the future Buddha up to the king’s gate. The Great Being said to the king, “Great king, slay not these seven kings; bind them by an oath and let them go. Let the knight enjoy all the honour due to us both, for it is not right that a warrior who has presented you with seven captive kings should be brought low. And as for yourself exercise charity, keep the precepts and rule your kingdom in righteousness and justice.” When the future Buddha had thus exhorted the king, they took off his mail. When they were taking it off piece by piece, he passed away.

In that life, future Buddha was the horse, Sāriputta was the knight, Ānanda was the king. At the end of the discourse, the monk who gave up persevering, attained Arahantship.

**Contemplate**

What is the method of learning of a Mahapurisa? It is an ancient teaching which integrates *Listening, Contemplating, Meditating* on the Buddha’s words into one great system that elevates the aspiring Mahapurisa to a life-long learning and
cultivation which enables him to confront the ever impending, overwhelming and complex conditionalities. Finally, a person becomes a Mahapurisa, a Great Being, who has triumphed over all forms of personal trials and “accomplished all that has to be accomplished”. This method of learning actuates a Mahapurisa, through a comprehensive system, to accumulate the necessary merits which are essential to expedite the full blossoming of a great personality to serve the world.

The future Buddha, even as an injured war horse, could unconditionally sacrifice his life to defeat the seven rival kings. The war horse’s noble sacrifice may have won the war for his country but the acme of this war was the victory over his personal fear of mortality and later, the people’s fear of life and death. Every dramatic personal trial as depicted in the Jātaka tales, transforms a Mahapurisa’s circumstantial experiences into the vast realisation of unconditioned Nibbāna, thus, truly benefitting him and the people closely connected to him.

Meditate

In Bhojājānīya Jātaka, as the king’s war horse, the future Buddha valiantly and tirelessly fought in order to fulfil his master’s task of capturing six of the seven attacking kings. Then, though fatally wounded, he saw that conditionally only he could capture the seventh king. He could foresee that if another war horse was used, the whole war would be lost by his king. With such knowledge of conditionality, he willingly finished his task of capturing the last king. Later, he made his king release all of them to convey the simple truth that there is no true enemy as one is only circumstantially so.
The Method of Learning of a Mahapurisa

The future Buddha, the courageous war horse,
while sacrificing his life,
also meaningfully paved the way for the warrior knight,
ensuring him victory and great fame,
and due rewards and honour from the king.
The future Buddha, the loyal war horse,
was not independent of the knight,
they were co-dependent on each other in the war.
Hence, without the knight, the warhorse could not be victorious.
Therefore the knight and horse were equal in status to be given
due respect, honour and consideration.

The seven kings symbolize the various aspects of ‘self’,
which have to be conquered,
not to be killed but to be ‘released’,
to be conditioned and unconditioned,
in order to be totally at ease.
The purpose of this training
is to ‘bind’ the various aspects of ‘self’,
by strong oath to work towards true awakening.
It is as though one is knighted with
the seven factors of enlightenment,
to become a warrior charging out of Samsāra.

This triumphant story awakened the monk who had given up
persevering, to Ārahanthood.
14. MAHĀ SĪLAVA JĀTAKA (NO.51)

Surrendering of “Self”, Perseverance Conquering “Others”

Listen

While residing in Jetavana Monastery, the Buddha told this story to a monk who had given up all effort.

Once upon a time, the future Buddha was the king of Benares, known as King Goodness the Great. He was named so as he was determined to do good all the time, even when the results might not benefit him. For example, he spent most of the royal treasury on the building and running of six houses of charity. In these places, food and aid were given freely to all the poor and needy who came along, even to unknown travellers.

Soon, King Goodness the Great became famous for his patience, loving-kindness and compassion. It was well known that he loved all beings just like a father loves his young children. King Goodness also observed certain fasting days and practised the five precepts and because of this, his gentle kindness became more and more pure.

Wishing to harm no one, King Goodness the Great refused to even imprison or injure wrongdoers. Knowing this, one of his high-ranking ministers tried to take advantage of this. He devised a scheme to cheat some of the women in the royal harem.

Soon everybody got wind of this and it was reported to the king. The king sent for the bad minister and said, “I have investigated and found that you have committed a criminal act. Word of it has spread and you have dishonoured yourself here in Benares. It would be better for you to go and live somewhere else. You may take all your wealth and your

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17 The abstaining from the five types of unwholesome actions. These are: destroying life, taking what is not given, doing wrong in sexual ways, speaking falsely and losing one’s mind from alcohol.
family. Go wherever you like and live happily there. Learn from this lesson.”

The minister took his family and all his belongings and moved to the city of Kosala. Since he was a very clever man, he worked his way up and became a minister of the king there. Soon he became the most trusted adviser to the King of Kosala. “The city of Benares is like a beehive where the bees do not sting! The ruling king is very feeble and weak. With only a very small army you can easily conquer the city and make it yours,” he said to the king one day.

The king doubted this, so he decided to check if this was true. So he sent some robbers to raid a remote village at the border of Benares. The villagers caught the looters and took them to King Goodness the Great. “Why do you steal and take what is not yours?” asked King Goodness. The robbers answered, “Your Highness, we are poor people. There is no way we can survive without money. As your kingdom has plenty of workers, there is no work for us to do. So we had to steal in order to survive.” Hearing this, the king gave gifts of money to them, advised them to change their ways and set them free.

When the King of Kosala was informed of this, he sent another gang of bandits to the streets of Benares. They too plundered the shops and even killed some people. When they were captured and brought to King Goodness, he treated them just as he had treated the first group of robbers.

Hearing this, the King of Kosala immediately sent his troops and elephants marching towards Benares. In those days, the King of Benares had a mighty army. It was said that they were capable of conquering the whole of India.

The mighty soldiers reported to King Goodness about the small invading army from Kosala. They asked for permission to attack and kill all of them. However, King Goodness the Great would not send them into battle. He said, “My children,
do not fight just so that I may remain as the king. If we destroy
the lives of others, we also destroy our own peace of mind.
Why should we kill others? Let them have the kingdom if
they want it so badly. I do not wish to fight."

Meanwhile, the King of Ksala sent him a warning, telling
him to give up his kingdom or fight. King Goodness the
Great sent this reply back: “I do not want you to fight with
me, and you do not want me to fight with you. If you want
the country, you can have it. Why should we kill people just
to decide who is to be king? What does it matter, even the
name of the country itself?” Hearing this, the ministers came
forward and pleaded, “Our lord, let us go out with our mighty
army. We will beat them with our weapons and capture all of
them. We are much stronger than them. We would not have
to kill any of them. And besides, if we surrender the city, the
enemy army would surely kill all of us!” But King Goodness
would not be moved. He refused to cause harm to anyone.
He replied, “Even if you do not wish to kill, by fighting many
will be injured. By accident some may die. No one knows in
the future whether our attackers will kill us or not. But we
do know whether our present actions are right or wrong.
Therefore, I will not harm, or cause others to harm any living
being!” Then King Goodness ordered the city gates to be
opened for the invaders.

The King of Kosala entered the city of Benares easily. He
surrounded the royal palace and captured King Goodness the
Great and all his ministers. They were taken to the cemetery
outside the city and buried up to their necks, standing straight
up, with only their heads above the ground. But even while
the dirt was being trampled down around his neck, the Great
King Goodness remained serene. So great were the discipline
and obedience of the ministers to King Goodness that none
spoke a word against anyone. But the King of Kosala had no
mercy. “Let the jackals do as they please come nightfall!” he
barked.
As the sky turned dark, a large band of jackals wandered into the cemetery. They could smell a feast of human flesh waiting for them. Seeing the approaching jackals, King Goodness and his ministers shouted all at the same time to scare the jackals away. This happened thrice before the clever jackals realised that these men were doomed and placed there for them to feast upon.

No longer afraid, they ignored the shouts and approached boldly. The jackal king walked right up to the face of King Goodness. The king offered his throat to the beast but before it could bite into him, the good King grabbed hold of the jackal’s chin with his teeth. Though the jackal king was not harmed in any way, it howled in fear as King Goodness’s bite had gripped its neck so tightly. This frightened the other jackals and they all ran away. Meanwhile, the jackal king thrashed back and forth, trying madly to free itself from the mighty jaws of the human king.

In the process, it loosened the dirt packed around the king’s neck and shoulders. King Goodness was able to wiggle himself free from the loosened earth and pull himself up from the hole on the ground when he released the screaming jackal. Then, he freed all his frightened ministers.

At that time, it happened that there was a corpse nearby which was lying on the border of the territories claimed by two rival demons. They were arguing over the division of the body. Suddenly, one demon said to the other, “Why are we quarrelling instead of enjoying the corpse? Right over there is King Goodness the Great who is famous for being a righteous man. He will divide the dead body for us in a fair manner.”

They dragged the body to the king and asked him to divide it between them fairly. “My dear friends, I would be glad to divide this for you. But I am really filthy now and in need of a bath. I must clean myself first,” he said. So the two demons used their magic powers to bring scented water, perfume, clothing, ornaments and flowers from the king’s own palace.
in Benares. He bathed, perfumed himself, dressed, and put on the ornaments and flower garlands.

When he was satisfied, King Goodness asked the demons to bring him the Benares’ Sword of State that was kept underneath the pillow of the King of Kosala, who was sleeping in the palace in Benares. Straightaway, the sword appeared, by magic, in front of King Goodness.

The king used the sword to cut the corpse into two equal halves, right down the spine. He washed the Sword of the State and strapped it to his side. The hungry demons happily gobbled up the fairly divided corpse. “Now that our bellies are full, is there anything else we can do to please you?” they asked King Goodness gratefully. He replied, “Use your magic and set me in my own bedroom in the palace next to the King of Kosala. In addition, put all my ministers back in their homes.” Without a word, the demons did exactly as the king had asked.

The King of Kosala was fast asleep in his royal chamber when King Goodness gently touched his belly with the sword of the state. The king awoke in great fright, and was shocked to see King Goodness leaning over him with a sword in hand in the dim lamplight. He had to rub his eyes to make sure he was not having a nightmare! Then he asked the great king, “How did you manage to get in here despite the heavy security? You were buried up to your neck in the cemetery. How is it that you are now spotlessly clean, sweet-smelling, dressed in your own royal robes, and decorated with fine jewellery and the loveliest flowers?”

King Goodness told him the story of his escape from the band of jackals, and gave an account about the two demons and how they gratefully helped him with their magic powers. On hearing the stories, the King of Kosala bowed his head down in shame and cried, “Oh great king, even the ferocious demons recognised your supreme goodness. But I, lucky
enough to be born as an intelligent and civilised human being, have failed to see how wonderful your pure goodness is. I promise I would never plot against you again, my lord. You who have attained such perfect harmlessness. And I promise to serve you forever as the truest of friends.”

The next day, the King of Kosala gathered all his soldiers in the palace courtyard. There he publicly praised the King of Benares and asked for his forgiveness. He returned King Goodness his kingdom and promised that he would always protect the good king. Then he punished his adviser, the dishonourable minister, and returned to Kosala with all his troops and elephants.

Seated majestically on his golden throne, with its legs like those of a gazelle and shaded from the sun by a large pure white royal umbrella, King Goodness the Great taught his loyal subjects this:

“People of Benares, morality and virtue begin with giving up the five unwholesome actions once and for all.
The noblest qualities a human being can have, whether he is a ruler or a subject, are loving-kindness and compassion. One cannot harm another, no matter what the reason or the cost is. And despite the danger, one must persevere until the greatness of the good heart wins in the end.”

At the end of the discourse, the monk who had given up all effort, attained Arahanthood.

Contemplate

In this Jātaka tale, the future Buddha showed that a Mahapurisa practises the Four Brahma Vihāra of Metta
(Loving-friendliness), Karunā (Compassion), Muditā (Altruistic Joy) and Upekkhā (Equanimity) as a consequential conditionality in confronting unpleasant experiences and difficult challenges.

For example, King Goodness had displayed Metta and Karunā to the treacherous minister and the robbers sent by King Kosala by not executing or imprisoning them as conditionally, it was the most appropriate course of action to align them towards enlightenment and not just for the sake of practising a virtue, without wisdom and discernment.

Muditā was also portrayed by King Goodness when he handed over his kingdom to King Kosala without any resentment and anger with the understanding that conditionally, if he retaliated, there would be great bloodshed on both sides. He exhibited great Upekkhā in facing the predatory jackals with non-conclusive conclusion and acted accordingly to bite the neck of the jackal king when the opportunity arose in order to free himself from the earth.

Dhammapada verse 276, ‘You yourselves must strive; the Tathāgatas (Buddhas) only can show the way’ is often misunderstood as striving to attain Nibbāna as the goal of life and Pāli Buddhism is about self-reliance to reach Nibbāna. On the contrary, self-reliance is neither the key nor the method of learning of a Mahapurisa to attain Nibbāna. This method of learning is much more profound. Nibbāna is every aspect of experiences as reality itself is the nearest to Enlightenment.

Instead of executing the treacherous Minister to nip the problem in the bud, King Goodness chose conditionally to let the story play itself out and acted accordingly because all those experiences were the nuances of Dependent Origination, inseparable from the reality of life which is closest to the truth of Nibbāna.

The traitorous minister portrays to us that the most difficult obstacle to overcome is the person closest to us. If his selfish
desire is denied, it will backfire with an attempt to destroy us. If the king had submitted to the minister’s selfish desire instead, it would have caused mass destruction. This obstacle is the mirror reflection of one’s most subtle self which has to be contemplatively meditated on and this is often mistaken as being indifferent or as an inaction.

Meditate

In Mahā Silava Jātaka, as a generous king who had banished a traitorous minister, the future Buddha conditionally avoided bloodshed in war by giving away his kingdom. With perseverance interplaying with the knowledge of conditionality, he regained his kingdom and saved his ministers from being killed by the enemies.

This is to convey the truth that it is not easy to recognise the most subtle ‘I’. It is like our very own eyelashes, totally unseen by our own eyes, yet it is so functional and important to our primal well being and is such a necessary protection to our seeing eyes. The traitorous minister, who had been by the side of the future Buddha, from the very beginning, so close to him and had supported him to build his kingdom, represents the most subtle ‘I’. His subtle ‘I’ that has helped us tremendously in our life, like the traitorous minister, is ultimately the most difficult for us to deal with.
Although it is easier to avoid facing the subtle “I” by killing the traitorous minister, it is immensely crucial to wait and draw out the subtle “I” and to let this most complicated conditionality unfold itself in order to finally witness the unconditioned Nibbāna.

Listening to the efforts of the future Buddha, in contemplative meditation on the traitorous minister which represents our eyelashes, the most subtle “I”, the backsliding monk who had given up all sense of pride, attained Arahanthood.
The Buddha told this story while dwelling near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Grove.

In the second last human birth as Prince Vessantara, the future Buddha emerged open-eyed from the womb free from impurities and held out his hand to his mother, saying, “Mother, I wish to make some gift. Is there anything?” Queen Phusatī dropped a purse of a thousand pieces into his outstretched hand. Thus, the future Buddha’s first thought was to renounce his own benefit to benefit others.

Later, when given a prince’s necklace worth a hundred thousand pieces of money by his father, King Sañjaya, he immediately gave it away to his nurses. When the king gave him another similar necklace, he did the same, and so it happened nine times over, renouncing the symbol of the secular love of his father to have universal love for all sentient beings.

At the age of eight, the future Buddha reflected that whatever he gave, came from without and it did not satisfy him and he made a wish to give something of his very own. Hence, he decided to give whatever part of his body that someone was in need of. He declared, “If any man should ask of me blood or body, eye or heart, I would give him. And as with all my being, I pondered with thoughts like these, the unshaken earth did shake and quake with mountains, woods and trees.” Thus, he renounced his most precious personal youth and a bright future to bring youthfulness and a bright future to the masses.

At the age of sixteen, accepting the marriage to his first cousin, Maddi and the investiture as king of the wealthy
kingdom of Sivi, he immediately distributed six hundred thousand pieces of money each day, renouncing his personal freedom and enjoyment as a single man to be a king and husband to provide freedom and enjoyment to the common folks.

Later, under the torment of the calamity of drought, the kingdom of Kālinga requested from him, the auspicious white elephant that had come to him on his very first birthday, to bring the rain of relief to their kingdom. Despite knowing that benefitting those in need comes together with loss to his people, he consented to the request at the expense of incurring the wrath of his subjects and losing his fame, security, status and power.

When he was banished to the Himalayan region for his innocent act of giving away the white elephant, he abstained from challenging the wish of his people, to avoid forcing his people to support the fulfilment of his perfection of renunciation. Instead, he requested a delay of one day, to give the gift of the seven hundreds, thus, renouncing the self-cherishing concern for himself, to cherish the welfare of the many.

Next, he asked his Queen Maddi to remarry when he was gone, renouncing the ultimate love of his life for her true happiness. When his wife told him that she would rather die than to be separated from him, he decided to take his wife and his two children, Prince Jāli and Princess Kanhājinā along. He uttered, “Even a slave against her will, I would not take away. But if she wishes, let her come; if not, then let her stay”, thus, renouncing his own comfort and convenience, for the comfort and happiness of his family.

Even his last words of departure from the kingdom to his subjects were for them to be careful, to give alms and do good deeds, renouncing self-pity and self-concern for the concern of the many. Again, on the road, everything that he had, including even the mass of ornaments which he wore on his
own body, he distributed to beggars, renouncing the subtlest grasping to materiality, for the prosperity of even the lowest group of humans. Then, four brahmins caught up with him and asked for his horses. He gave each brahmin one steed, then and there. A fifth brahmin came and asked the king for his chariot. He also gave this away without any clinging in his heart, thus, renouncing his travel comforts for the satisfaction of all without exception.

Upon reaching his uncle’s kingdom of Ceta, he was offered the rulership of the whole kingdom. This too, he renounced in order to fulfil the wish of his own subjects to banish him to the wilderness and avoid a quarrel between the two kingdoms, thus, renouncing righteousness for the rights of all beings and avert bloodshed.

The family, then, dwelt peacefully for seven months in huts made by Vissakamma, the heavenly carpenter, under the instruction of King Sakka. However, one day, along came Jūjaka, a hermit, who under the instigation of his wife, Amittatāpani, sought to request the future Buddha to give his children to him to be their servants. Although he rejoiced at the opportunity to part again with something dear, the future Buddha, with tears and great pain in his heart, requested his children to follow his will. With utmost respect, falling upon Vessantara’s feet, his sobbing children agreed to fulfil their father’s selfless wish in order that he may renounce his heartfelt pride and joy so that all sentient beings may be heirs to the kingdom of Enlightenment.

Later, when Maddi who was out gathering food, returned to the hermitage, she realised that the children were missing. Weeping and distraught, she looked around frantically for them and finally, fainted. When she came to, Vessantara explained what has happened and Maddi assured him that she rejoiced with his unparalleled gift of the children.

Later, Lord Sakka, king of gods, saw that the earth shook when Vessantara parted with his children. Concerned that if
an evil person were to ask for Maddi, Vessantara would surely consent, thus leaving him alone, helpless and destitute, Lord Sakka appeared to Vessantara in the guise of a brahmin and begged for Maddi, intending to return her to Vessantara later.

When Sakka asked for Maddi, Vessantara offered her with delight, renouncing his heart essence to give the heart essence to the world. Seeing Vessantara’s concern for her, Maddi cried aloud with a lion’s voice, “From maidenhood I was his wife, he is my master still. Let him give me to whomever he desires, or to sell me, or even kill me”, renouncing her pillar of support to give the pillar of support to all the sentient beings.

Seeing Maddi’s excellent resolution, King Sakka praised her and returned her to Vessantara. Then, King Sakka gave Vessantara eight boons. In choosing his boons, the future Buddha sang:

“May my father reconcile, let him recall me soon
and set me in my royal seat,
this is the first boon I crave.
May I condemn no man to death,
even though he may be guilty,
condemned, may I release from death,
this second boon I crave.
May all the people seeking for help look only unto me,
the young, the old, the middle-aged,
this is the third boon I crave.”

This signifies that the giving up of everything for the wellbeing of all sentient beings is to rid oneself of the selfish defilements of the personal ego, thus, renouncing even the subtlest pride of renunciation. Further, Vessantara asked for the following boons:

“May I not seek my neighbour’s wife,
contented with my own,
nor subject to a woman’s will,
this the fourth boon I crave.”
Knowing that compassion is tinted with lust, Vessantara requested the fourth boon so that he can have compassion for sentient beings without being consumed by lust.

I pray, Sakka, grant long life to my beloved son, conquering the world in righteousness, this is the fifth boon I crave.
Then, at the end of every night, at dawning of the day, may celestial food be revealed, this is the sixth boon I crave.
May means of giving never fail, and may I give away with hearty gladness and content, this the seventh boon I crave.
Hence freed, may I advance straight to heaven, then, that I may no more be born upon the earth, this the eighth boon I crave.’

Finally, through the intervention of devas, Vessantara was also reunited with his children and parents and regained his kingdom. He and his family returned to the kingdom of Sivi and received a great welcome by all the people.

At that time, Devadatta was Jūjaka, the lady Cinca was Amittatāpanī, Anuruddha was Sakka, King Sudhhodana was King Sañjaya, Mahāmāyā was Phusatī, Rāhula’s mother was Queen Maddi, Rāhula was Prince Jāli, Uppalavannā was Princess Kanhājinā, the disciples of the Buddha were the rest of the people and King Vessantara was the future Buddha.

Meditate

Renunciation should never depart from *conditionality*. The prevailing conditionality was that the extraordinary king was inseparable from the ordinary subjects, hence, their wishes as well.
The future Buddha had renounced the subtle pride of indestructibility. This indestructibility is only attained with the total recognition of dependent conditionality. Hence, as a sovereign king, who had renounced his whole kingdom to avoid taints of lust, he ultimately could return to rule compassionately guarding against lust.

The future Buddha had to be a mirror for Queen Maddi, Prince Jāli, Princess Kanhājinā and others. Their reverence was tainted with the need for security. Therefore, the future Buddha had to show that *conditionality* is the true “husband” and “father”. This was why he offered them to whomever asked for them first. He offered them to *conditionality* so that they could gain a protection far greater than any form of protection he could offer even as the best husband and the best father. This is the greatest love of all, far greater than the greatest conceivable love of a father or husband, that it even heated the seat of King Sakka. This inconceivable love is the uncanny twist to the ideal of perfection of fulfilment in Buddhism. The future Buddha had to break the spell of *conditionality* in achieving the idealised final destiny of soul mates which would curse one to be imprisoned by the perfection itself. Therefore, the future Buddha had to burst the illusory bubble so as to elevate the idealised union to an endless proximating infinity (The greater offering of Queen Maddi, Prince Jāli and Princess Kanhājinā to all beings in this grand scheme of *conditionality*) which has the closest boundless qualities of Nibbāna. “Let whoever beings who come first and request for them, I shall offer them without consideration of status or looks?” has not only freed the future Buddha but has freed all to the unsurpassed state of equality! Ultimately, everyone has to be equal to the unsurpassed reality of awakening from our samsaric pursuit of our dreams!
CHAPTER SEVEN

LISTENING, CONTEMPLATING, MEDITATING
LISTENING, CONTEMPLATING, MEDITATING

Listening, Contemplating, Meditating on the Jātaka Tales

Essentially, the Jātaka tales provide skilful illustrations of insights into Dependent Origination and its four important qualities of non-conclusive conclusion, necessity, invariability of change and conditionality.

The first quality of non-conclusive conclusion of Dependent Origination is illustrated in the Cullakalinga Jātaka. By forming a non-conclusive conclusion, Nandisena managed to intercept the prophecy through his appropriate query and the indiscriminate answer of the ascetic, the future Buddha.

The second quality of necessity of Dependent Origination is illustrated in the Saccamkira Jātaka. Relishing his kingship, born from excessive accrued merits but without understanding Dependent Origination, had caused the king the backlash of his own downfall. This is like licking honey off the edge of a blade. On the other hand, the future Buddha had reigned successfully as the new king due to his mastery over the conditionality of merits and self.

Invariability of Change of Dependent Origination, the third quality is depicted in the Kanavera Jātaka. Through not understanding the invariability of change, our ever succumbing attitude to deceptive fondness in relationships eternally binds us in kammic indebtedness. Instead of continuously repaying a single act of kindness out of gratitude that deceptively satisfies one being, we should strive towards liberating lives which would invariably benefit all.
Conditionality of Dependent Origination, the fourth quality, is displayed in the Ghata Jātaka. In order to convey the profound virtue of detachment, the future Buddha had to triumph over his self-reverence to be reborn as one of the ten slave brothers. He had to fabricate the state of lunacy to serve a critical purpose. This was only possible through the conditionality of a deeply bonded brotherhood.

The future Buddha in his second last birth, as King Vessantara, needed to perform the greatest sacrifices exceeding all forms of sacrifices imaginable by people. This should not be oversimplified as undertaking the highest heroic acts that our minds can conceive.

Conversely, the antithesis of a Buddha, Mara, after sacrificing all to attain supremacy, relishes the idea that the whole world belongs to him. Hence, Mara wants to keep the world the way he likes it. Mara becomes so powerful in Samsāra because he also understands conditionality but is trapped by his grasping to this most powerful knowledge itself. This is illustrated in the case of the Buddha’s archenemy, Devadatta and King Ajatasattu who had under the influence of Devadatta, usurped his father’s throne and tortured his father to death. Both of them had also relinquished much to earn lots of merits but these sacrifices only qualify them to become Pacceka Buddhas, a step falling short of the attainment of Sammā Sambuddha. Such tainted acts of sacrifice while appearing similar have to be distinguished from the quintessential sacrifice of a genuine seeker of the truth. In fact, the sacrifice of everything is the exact requirement to complete the cosmos. The future Buddha gave up the most cherished part of self to ultimately “claim back” the authenticity of the world, confirmed by the eight boons of King Vessantara. This essential understanding will triumph over the grasp of Mara who gives up everything to own the world for that which he cherishes the most, himself.

18 The cousin and disciple of Buddha who tried to kill the Buddha
The aim of *Listening, Contemplating, Meditating* on the Jātaka tales

Nonetheless, the seeming misdeeds or less than impeccable conduct of the future Buddha highlighted in these Jātaka tales are not intended to detract from the importance of leading a harmless way of life, to do good and avoid evil. However, we must be careful not to fall into the trap of religiously grasping to concepts of what is “good” and “bad”.

Actually, the overly rigid adherence to rules, codes of conduct and ideas of morality may unnecessarily stress and obstruct a sincere practitioner with too many unimportant facets of the conventional truths. Ultimately, the greatest danger of this approach, particularly, to educating an aspiring Mahapurisa, is its defect of permanently obscuring the ultimate truth of *Dependent Origination*. It is by going beyond wholesomeness-unwholesomeness that a Mahapurisa, as the victorious one, can triumphantly exclaim:

“Birth is exhausted (No more cycle of becoming from good to evil to good). “The ‘pure life’ has been lived. My task has been accomplished. What has to be done has been done.”

Therefore, the ultimate aim of an earnest truth seeker is to reach the unconditioned state of Nibbāna, neither blinded nor shackled by relative wholesome states (cyclic existence of wholesome turning unwholesome and vice versa).

To attain Sotāpanna, the first stage of sainthood, one needs to break the fetter of “adherence to rites and rituals”. The belief that morality definitely leads to enlightenment can be a form of grasping to rites and rituals.

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19 Utterance of all Arahants on awakening. Refer to Vatthupama Sutta Majjhima Nikāya 7

20 Sabbasava Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 2.11, Translated by Bhikkhu Ēnānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi
The Sotāpanna are said to have “opened the eye of the Dhamma” because they have realised that whatever arises will cease\(^{21}\). By seeing causation, the Sotāpanna realises *Dependent Origination*. Their conviction in the true Dhamma becomes unshakeable\(^{22}\). The insight of Anicca (impermanence) allows them to see good turning into evil in the next second as condition changes. Dukkha (unsatisfactoriness) allows them to see good dependently arising with evil at the same time as one man’s meat is another man’s poison. The reality of Anatta fully and unmistakably unmasks the wrong belief of self to be of concrete existence rather than of dependent existence. It also results in witnessing the reality of beyond good-bad rather than grasping to good or bad. Only those who witness this will have full faith in the sublime Triple Gem, the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, which fully uphold the truth that nothing is greater than the law of *Dependent Origination*.

The foundation of *Listening, Contemplating, Meditating* on Jātaka tales

The reason for highlighting these exceptional stories is to let the brilliant radiance of *Dependent Origination*, the un compounded reality shine forth, so that morality, which is the common teaching of all religions, does not obscure the rays of the brightest sun, the ultimate teaching of all Buddhas, which truly benefits all sentient beings.

\(^{21}\) Bhikkhu, Thanissaro. “Upatissa-pasine: Upatissa’s (Sāriputta’s) Question”. Access to Insight. Retrieved 25 June 2015. Then to Sāriputta the wanderer, as he heard this Dhamma exposition, there arose the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: “What ever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.”

\(^{22}\) From Sarakani Sutta, Samyutta Nikāya 55.24, The 4 qualities of a streamwinner: (1) unshakable faith in the Buddha, (2) in the Dharma, and (3) in the Sangha; and (4) moral virtue dear to the saints.
“But when a Tathāgata, a Perfected One, a Fully Enlightened One arises in the world, then there is a manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then no blinding darkness, no total darkness.”

The dualistic Samsāra continuously throws us into dilemma and challenges. The false appearance that an unwholesome state could be ultimately solved with a wholesome state, diverts us from the path to unparalleled clear comprehension. Finally, the state of Sammā Samādhi enables us to see reality in totality and this wins us the command of conditionality.

It cannot be overly emphasised, however, that it is vital for us to fully practice and ground ourselves well in the foundations of “Sila, Samādhi and Paññā” (Morality, Concentration and Wisdom) before we embark on applying the principles of Dependent Origination. Without the training of morality, we run the risk of unconsciously misusing Dependent Origination to protect and reinforce the concept of “self” instead of utilizing it to dismantle the “I”. Alertness is required to control the deception of “I”. It can possess a tainted motivation or a well camouflaged goal born of self and selfish intentions. Indeed, navigating through Samsāra with Dependent Origination is like incessantly walking on a tightrope with a fine balancing pole amidst all conditionalities.

For Buddha there is no higher truth than the inconceivable truth of Dependent Origination – “It is not something as He thought of it or had tried to think of it”. For Dhamma, Dependent Origination is the spine of omniscience that supports all forms of Dhammas, without which all knowledges will backfire. For Sangha, if he practices anything without the knowledge of Dependent Origination, then he cannot see the ultimate Buddha and the ultimate Dhamma and therefore, he is not qualified as an ultimate Sangha (the four pairs of sainthood).

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23 Samyutta Nikāya LVI, 38 Translated by Bhikkhu Khantipalo
The system of *Listening, Contemplating, Meditating* on the Buddha’s words is the grand architectural blueprint unfolded that will unmistakably reveal the whole complete teachings hidden in the Tipitaka and be the citadel cradle which buttresses all the destined aspiring Mahapurisa.
Appendix

Translations Of The Four Qualities Of Paticcasamuppāda (Dependent Origination)
By Various Authors

“Iti kho, bikkhave, yā tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idapaccayatā – ayam vuccati, bhikkave, paticcasamuppādo”.

These four qualities of Dependent Origination have been defined and explained in various ways as follows:-

1. “Thus bhikkhus, the actuality in this, the inerrancy, the not-otherwiseness, specific conditionality: this is called dependent origination”……..¹

2. “This suchness, monks, this invariability, this irreversibility, that is to say, this law of conditionality, I call the principle of Dependent Origination.” [S.II.25]²

3. To quote the texts, “objectivity, necessity, invariability and conditionality – this is said to be ....conditioned co-origination” (tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idhapaccayatā ayam vuccati .... paticcasāmuppado) (S. II.26)³.

4. “Causation has the characteristics of objectivity, empirical necessity, invariability and conditionality”(S II26).⁴

5. The Buddha, in the discussions on causality, mentioned four characteristics of causality: (1) objectivity (tathatā), (2) necessity (avitathatā), (3) invariability (anaññathatā) and (4) conditionality (idappaccayatā).⁵
6. This doctrine is said to have four great characteristics such as, (i) objectivity (tathatā), (ii) necessity (avitatathatā) (iii) invariability (anaññathatā) and (iv) conditionality (idappaccayatā).

7. That the Buddha discovers and penetrates into; having discovered and penetrated into, (he) declares it, teaches it, makes it known, establishes it, reveals it, analyses it and clarifies it saying “Look!” It is this retrospectively established generality that is defined by the four terms, ‘thusness’ or objectivity (tathatā), ‘no-separate-true-ness’ or invariability (avitathatā), ‘non-otherwise-ness’ or necessity (anaññathatā) and ‘this-condition-ness’ or conditionality (idappaccayatā).

8. Dependent Co-Origination, as a universal principle is described as having four characteristics, namely, objectivity (tathatā), necessity (avitatathatā), invariability (anaññathatā) and conditionality (idappaccayatā).

9. From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. What’s there in this way is a reality, not an unreality, not other than what it seems, conditioned by this/that. This is called dependent co-arising.

10. “However there is no any misrepresentation with regard to the term Paticcasamuppāda since it has been interpreted by the Buddha himself. “Paticcasamuppāda is said objectivity, necessity, invariability and conditionality.”

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1 Bhikkhu Bodhi, The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya at page 551
2 “And what, bhikkhu, is dependent origination? With birth as condition, aging-and-death (comes to be)”': whether there is an arising of Tathāgatas or no arising of Tathāgatas, that element still persists, the stableness of the Dhamma, the fixed course of this Dhamma, specific conditionality. A Tathāgata awakens to this and breaks through to it. Having done so, he explains it, teaches it, proclaims it, establishes it, discloses it, analyses it, elucidates it, And he says: See! With birth as condition, bhikkhus, aging-and-death.’
“‘With existence as condition, birth’…‘With clinging as condition, existence’…‘With craving as condition, clinging’… ‘With feeling as condition, craving’…‘With contact as condition, feeling’… ‘With the six sense basis as condition, contact’…‘With name-and-form as condition, the sense basis’…‘With consciousness as condition, name and form’…with volitional formations as condition, consciousness’…‘with ignorance as conditions, volitional formations’: whether there is an arising of Tathāgatas or no arising of Tathāgatas, that element still persists, the stableness of the Dhamma, the fixed course of the Dhamma, specific conditionality. A Tathāgata awakens to this and breaks through to it. Having done so, he explains it, teaches it, proclaims it, establishes it, discloses it, analyses it, elucidates it, and he says: See! With ignorance as condition, bhikkhus, volitional formations.’ “Thus bhikkhus, the actuality in this, the inerrancy, the not-otherwiseness, specific conditionality: this is called dependent origination”……..

2 Ven Prayudh Payutto Dependent Origination: the Buddhist Law of Conditionality
The principle of Dependent Origination is one of Buddhism’s most important and unique teachings. In numerous passages of the Pāli Canon, it was described by the Buddha as a natural law, a fundamental truth which exists independently of the arising of enlightened beings:

“Whether a Tathāgata appears or not, this condition exists and is a natural fact, a natural law; that is, the principle of conditionality.

“The Tathāgata, enlightened to and awakened to that principle, teaches it, shows it, formulates it, declares it, reveals it, makes it known, clarifies it and points it out, saying,

“‘See here, conditioned by ignorance are volitional impulses.’

“This suchness, monks, this invariability, this irreversibility, that is to say, this law of conditionality, I call the principle of Dependent Origination.” [S.II.25]

The following excerpts indicate the importance which the Buddha ascribed to the principle of Dependent Origination:

“Whoever sees Dependent Origination sees the Dhamma; whoever sees the Dhamma sees Dependent Origination.” [M.I.191]

3 Prof K.N. Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory Of Knowledge page 447 [1963] Published by London GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD RUSKIN HOUSE MUSEUM STREET, He notes that causation in early Buddhism is not subjective and is not a category imposed by the mind on phenomena. He further said that the commentaries explained objectivity “As those conditions alone, neither more or less, bring about this or that event, there is said to be ‘objectivity’”. “As there is no failure even for a moment to produce the events which arise when the conditions come together”, there is said to be “necessity”; since no event different from (the effect) arises with (the help of) other events or conditions there is said to be “invariability”, from the condition or group of conditions, which give rise to such states as decay and death etc, as stated, there is said to be conditionality”.

4 Prof K.N. Jayatilleke in Contemporary Relevance of Buddhist Philosophy, Buddha Jayanthi Lecture, Delivered in India, in 1969, The Wheel Publication No. 258 One of the characteristic features of the philosophy of the Buddha, which distinguishes it from Upanisadic philosophy and the non-Vedic schools is its causal conception of the universe. The Buddha states: “What is causation? On account of birth arises decay and death. Whether the Tathāgatas arise or not, this order exists namely the fixed nature of phenomena the regular patterns of phenomena. This the Tathāgata discovers and comprehends; having discovered and comprehended it, he points out, teaches it, lays it down, establishes, reveals, analyses, clarifies it and says,
'Look!' (SII 25). Its importance is seen from the fact that an understanding of the Dhamma is not possible without comprehending the causal theory: “He who sees the nature of causation sees the Dhamma and he who sees the Dhamma sees the nature of causation” (M I 191). The two principles of causal determination are formally stated. There is a causal correlation between two sets of events A and B ‘if whenever A happens, B Happens and whenever A does not happen, B does not happen’ (or is it, ‘whenever B does not happen, A does not happen’). These formulae are stated both in an abstract as well as a concrete form as applying to the world of dynamic reality. Causation is an objective feature of the world and not a category imposed by the mind: “Causation has the characteristics of objectivity, empirical necessity, invariability and conditionality” (S II26).

5 Thalawathugoda Nigroda Thero, A COMPARATIVE SURVEY OF BUDDHIST AND WESTERN CRITIQUES OF METAPHYSICS, A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE 2007

He had said that “Unlike the Humean philosophy that denies causality, Buddhism affirms the existence of causal connections, not just as an association of the mind but as a natural phenomenon. Buddhism does not posit a cause of the world but it maintains that there is a causal connection between events in the world. The Buddha, in the discussions on causality, mentioned four characteristics of causality: (1) objectivity (tathatā), (2) necessity (avitathatā), (3) invariability (anaññathatā) and (4) conditionality (idappaccayatā). Objectivity of causality means that the idea of causality is not mere fabrication or a product of association as Hume maintained. Rather, it is a reality. The second and third characteristics of causality, namely necessity and invariability, stress the lack of exception or the existence of regularity. They indicate that it is a necessity that certain sets of conditions give rise to certain effects and not to something completely different. For instance, human beings give birth to human beings and not dogs and conversely dogs give birth to dogs and not human beings. There are no accidents or events that occur by chance. The fourth characteristic of causation, namely conditionality, is the most significant in Buddhism. Through this characteristic, Buddhism steers clear of two extremes of unconditional necessity implied in strict determinism and the unconditional arbitrariness assumed by accidentalism. Therefore, causality is not just strictly necessary; rather it is dependent on certain conditions. These conditions will then generate certain events as the effects of some causes. In Buddhism, this is called the doctrine of dependent-origination. As the Buddha articulated the doctrine, “When this is present, that comes to be; from the arising of this, that arises. When this is absent, that does not come to be; on the cessation of this, that ceases.” This statement points to the middle way between determinism and pure accidentalism. On the basis of the present experiences of causal happenings, inductive inferences are made with regard to the past and the future.


“To understand the Buddhist notion on reality, one has to comprehend the interdependency and interrelatedness of every phenomenon. The aspects of reality (subject-object relation or the human beings and their objective-world) are closely related to various causes and factors. It presents a theory of multiple conditions of both mental and external occurrences. It proposes multiplicity or plurality of causes. Any process is to be analysed based on various causes and factors. Following this doctrine, the idea of a single cause or first cause is rejected.
This doctrine is said to have four great characteristics such as, (i) objectivity (tathatā), (ii) necessity (avitatathatā) (iii) invariability (anaññathatā) and (iv) conditionality (idappaccayatā). The first characteristic indicates that it is not a mental fabrication or a mere theory to explain the phenomenal world. The second aspect explains the regularity of the process of causation. The third, invariability means that there is no constant between the causes and effects. The principle of cause and effect accounts for the uniformity experienced in nature and the predictability of future events. And the fourth, conditionality simply means that there is more than one condition operative in the process of causation.

The Buddha had formulated only one theory, that is, the theory of dependent arising (paticcasamuppāda), and he proceeded to apply it in the explanation of every aspect of experience. ‘Observation categorical,’ namely, predictability with absolute certainty is not part of the Buddha’s formulation of the principle. Therefore, instead of formulating the principle as ‘When this, that,’ where ‘that’ refers to what is yet to come, the Buddha moves in the opposite direction, “When that is, this comes to be” (imasmim sati idam hoti, asmin satidam bhavati’). This move is also reflected in the very term coined by the Buddha in order to express the ‘observed instances of phenomena. Thus, the term paticcasamuppanna refers to that which has “arisen having moved toward (the conditions)” (prati + itya). It is tracing the effect back to the cause rather than predicting the effect from the cause or causes. Thus defining dependent arising (paticcasamuppāda), the Buddha made the following statement: Whether the Buddhas were to arise or not arise, decay and death are dependent upon birth. That status (dhatu), that stability of phenomena (dhammatthitata), that regularity in phenomena (dhammaniyamata), that conditionality (idappaccayatā) has remained (thita). That the Buddha discovers and penetrates into; having discovered and penetrated into, (he) declares it, teaches it, makes it known, establishes it, reveals it, analyses it and clarifies it saying “Look!” It is this retrospectively established generality that is defined by the four terms, ‘thusness’ or objectivity (tathatā), ‘non-separate-true-ness’ or invariability (avitathatā), ‘non-otherwise-ness’ or necessity (anaññathatā) and ‘this-condition-ness’ or conditionality (idappaccayatā).

Asanga Tilakaratne, Director, Postgraduate Institute of Pāli and Buddhist Studies, 133/19, Nawala Road, Narahenpita, Colombo 05 Sri Lanka Dependent Co-Origination, as a universal principle is described as having four characteristics, namely, objectivity (tathatā), necessity (avitathatā), invariability (anaññathatā) and conditionality (idappaccayatā). In this characterization objectivity refers to the fact that PS is not a creation by the Buddha or by any other person. But it is there whether the Buddhas were to be born or not. What the Buddha does is to reveal it, which is already present there, to 1 Samyuttanikāya II. p.28. 2 the world. In other words, PS is not a subjective explanation but an objective reality. This character of reality has been explained with the following simile: Suppose a man faring through the forest, through the great woods, sees an ancient path, an ancient road traversed by men of former days. And he goes along it and sees an ancient city, a former prince’s domain, where men of former days lived, a city adorned by gardens, groves, pools, foundations of walls, a beautiful spot, … Just so did I behold an ancient path, an ancient way traversed by former Buddhas. …Following that path, I came to understand fully decay and death, their arising, their cessation and the path leading to their cessation. The simile indicates that PS is not an invention or a creation but a What’s there in this way is a reality, not an unreality, not other than what it seems, conditioned by this/that discovery of an objective reality existing in the world by the Buddha. The second characteristic describes the situation that effect
necessarily occurs when the conditions are there. In the presence of all the necessary
conditions the effect is bound to happen. The third says that there is a constant relation
between the cause and the effect. This highlights the fact that there is a correlation
between the cause and the effect. The fact that there is a group of conditions coming
together to make an effect is said by the fourth. These four characteristics underscore
the real law-like nature of the principle of dependent origination.

9 Bhikkhu Thanissaro Paccaya Sutta :Requisite Conditions SN 12.20
“From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. Whether or not there is
the arising of Tathāgatas, this property
stands — this regularity of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma, this this/
that conditionality. The Tathāgata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that.
Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it,
sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain, & says, ‘Look.’ From ignorance
as a requisite condition come fabrications. What’s there in this way is a reality, not
an unreality, not other than what it seems, conditioned by this/that. This is called
dependent co-arising.”

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THE JĀTAKA TALES

This Series aims to reintroduce the ancient system for awakening of Listening, Contemplating, Meditating on the actual words of the Buddha, the Pāli Tipitaka. Currently, the Pāli Tipitaka is read based on the progressive approach of Pariyatti (intellectual study), Patipatti (practice) and Pativedha (penetrating the truth) whereas in this system, these three processes are carried out in an integrated or even, simultaneous manner. It provides insights into how numerous sentient beings were enlightened during the lifetime of the Buddha upon listening to the words spoken by Him.

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