

ETHICS ACROSS CULTURES

AN INTRODUCTORY TEXT WITH READINGS

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BUDDHIST ETHICS

TERROR IN TOKYO'S SUBWAY

Besides having a special interest in Buddhism, Yasuo Hayashi, later dubbed the "Murder Machine" by the Japanese press, had an impeccable science background and quickly climbed to a top position in Aum Shinrikyo's Ministry of Science and Technology. And on an early Monday morning, March 20, 1995, in the thick of Tokyo's commuter rush hour, he clearly proved his loyalty to Aum. With the sharpened tip of his umbrella, Hayashi neatly pierced through the rolled morning newspaper concealing his three packets of deadly liquid sarin nerve gas as his train rolled into the Akihabara station. He immediately disembarked, exited the underground subway, took an antidote for the poison, and escaped into a waiting car driven by another Aum member. At the same time, the same scenario played itself out at four other stations as Aum members, each on different trains, pierced their bags of sarin and escaped with their designated drivers.

The result. Total confusion and disaster. Passengers spilled out of subway cars choking, vomiting, and blinded. Thousands of commuters clawed their way to fresh air above ground and collapsed. Twelve victims died and over 5,500 were seriously injured. The Tokyo subway system acts as the circulatory system for the working Japanese and carries over 4 million passengers a day. If full-strength sarin had been used, the fatalities would have reached into the tens of thousands. And Japan was still reeling from the Great Hanshin earthquake that devastated the port city of Kobe and claimed over 6,000 lives two months earlier on January 17, 1995.

Aum members were soon linked to the attacks. Confessions revealed the ultimate target: the subway station at Kasumigaseki, the convergence point of the assailants' trains. The station is a short walk to the Japanese Parliament, the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs, the police headquarters, and Emperor Akihito's Imperial Palace. The Kasumigaseki station is also the deepest subway station in Japan and had been built as the government's own atomic shelter. The attack was aimed at paralyzing the Japanese government. Hayashi was eventually arrested in December 1996 on Ishigaki Island, where he was discovered carrying a token in memorial of those who died from the gas attack—a small Buddhist altar.¹

"Aum Shinrikyo" literally means "the true teachings of Aum," Aum being the hallowed Sanskrit mantra (Om) that represents the sacred sound of the universe and depicting the triune Hindu gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. When Aum was given official status as a religion in 1989, there were over four thousand members. Now, even after the gas attack, its membership is well over a hundred thousand. Aum's founder and self-proclaimed visionary is the semi-blind Shoko Asahara, whose real name is Chizuo Matsumoto. Matsumoto was born in 1955 in the small village of Yatsushiro on Japan's southernmost island of Kyushu. Nearly two months after the attack, Matsumoto was found in a crawl space less than three feet high at Kamikuishiki, carrying, not a Buddhist altar, but nearly one hundred thousand dollars in cash. He was arrested and eventually charged with the murders of twenty-five people—twelve deaths as a result of his order to gas the subway along with thirteen other related deaths.

Asahara's devotees are young, well-educated, and committed to Asahara, the "new Buddha." Mitsuhara Inaba now knows that Asahara was the mastermind behind the Tokyo nerve gas attacks. Yet he still keeps a photo of Asahara on his *but sudan*, or home altar. He and other members had been desperately searching for a new and transforming Buddhism, one with a more active and practical application for their lives. Among Japanese, Buddhism had often been associated with funerary rites and was thus losing its meaning among the younger generation. Countless followers remain convinced that their master's teachings have a firm footing in the Buddhist tradition. In the words of Inaba: "For me the Master [Asahara] was a spiritual leader. Not a prophet or anything, but the person who would provide the final answer to Buddhist teachings."²

Aum Shinrikyo sees itself as unmistakably Buddhist. At the same time, it borrows elements from other traditions like Hindu and Tibetan yoga as well as Christian and Jewish teachings and even smatterings of

millennialism and Nostradamus. Asahara not only claimed to be the “new Buddha,” but he also viewed himself as the new Christ, the redeemer of humanity. When the police located the cult’s secret compound in the little village of Kamikuishiki, on the foothills of the sacred Mount Fuji, they discovered this to be a “death factory” where the bodies of thirty or more victims were incinerated in a giant microwave oven. They came upon a giant statue of the Hindu god of destruction, Shiva, blocking the entrance to a secret door to the chemical laboratory where the deadly sarin nerve gas was produced. How genuinely Buddhist are the teachings of Aum Shinrikyo? What Buddhist teachings could possibly justify the deliberate attack on innocent commuters and passengers?

■ THE THREE SIGNS OF EXISTENCE

The Buddha delivered his first sermon at the village of Sarnath. Here he presented the core of his teachings—the Four Noble Truths and the Middle Way. Despite later disputes as to the proper interpretation of his teachings, all Buddhists believe in the Four Noble Truths and in the Middle Way. Here, the Buddha presents his diagnosis regarding our fundamental human condition, and he offers a cure. Before we examine these teachings, we need to first situate them within the Buddhist three signs of existence. In effect, these signs, along with the core teachings, constitute the Buddhist *dharma*, or “teachings.”³

FIRST SIGN: *DUKKHA*

The young woman Kisagotami gave birth to a son who died of an illness within a year. Stricken with grief, the mother carried the dead boy from house to house asking for medicine to restore him back to life. She then approached Siddhartha Gautama (the personal and family name of the Buddha). Siddhartha counseled her to go to every home in the village and bring back a mustard seed from each household that has not experienced death. She returned empty-handed, realizing that death stings each and every one of us.

The celebrated fifth-century Buddhist sage Buddhaghosa wrote this story in his *Vissudhimagga*. It poignantly illustrates the first sign of existence, *dukkha*, the universality of suffering. *Dukkha* literally means “dislocation” and denotes a suffering that goes beyond physical pain. Physical pain can be measurable, but suffering is much more intimate and less dis-

cernible. *Dukkha* refers to suffering that is profoundly existential, of which death is a stark reminder.

SECOND SIGN: *ANICCA*

The *Buddhacarita* (*Deeds of the Buddha*) tells of young prince Siddhartha, who was born in 623 BCE in Lumbini, on the border of India and what is today Nepal. Siddhartha’s father, ruler of the Sakya clan, wanted to shield his young son from the harsh realities of life and prohibited him from going beyond the palace walls. Nevertheless, young Siddhartha bribed his charioteer to take him outside the palace.

On their first journey, they encountered a very old man barely walking along the road. On another journey, they passed by a sick person being attended to by others. On their third journey, they passed by a funeral procession. On their fourth journey, they rode by laborers sweating and struggling while plowing the fields. These experiences left their imprint in young Siddhartha’s heart and memory. They laid the groundwork for what he later referred to as the second sign of existence: *anicca*. *Anicca* means “impermanence” and refers to the fact that all of life, without exception, undergoes change. We age. We struggle to make ends meet. And we die. Nothing stays the same. Each moment rises and falls. Each moment in time therefore carries within itself life and death, being and nonbeing. Life is like a never-ending river.

THIRD SIGN: *ANATMAN*

The third sign of existence, *anatman* (*anatta* in Pali), literally means “no-self,” or “no-soul.” Here, the Buddha takes issue with the Hindu teaching regarding *atman*. As we recall, *atman* is the individual immortal soul or self in each of us. The all-important goal in Hinduism is to realize the truth of our identity as *atman*. For the Buddha, however, there is no empirical evidence to support the idea of an individual, private, independent soul or self. However, we all possess a true nature. Yet this true nature, our Buddha nature, is not some private entity. Buddhists refer to our true nature as *anatman*.

This notion of *anatman* is the most challenging idea in Buddhist thought. We in the West are accustomed to think and speak in terms of an individual, private, and permanent entity we call “self.” For Buddhists, what we think of as “self” is actually a continually changing pattern of

physical and mental forces. Buddhists essentially break down our experience into five components, or aggregates, called *skandhas*:

- physical form (matter)
- feelings and sensations
- perceptions
- mental activities, particularly that of volition
- consciousness

Together, these five aggregates constitute *nama-rupa*, or "name-form." The "I" that we think exists is actually a composite of these five components, and each component undergoes constant change. In which case, there are no logical grounds for assuming a permanent "I."

When I am playing the piano, what is really happening in light of these five aggregates? First, there is my physical form, my body, in contact with the physical form of the piano. Second, there are the sensations involved in pressing down on the keys, in touching the pedal, as well as feelings evoked by the music. Third, there is the perception of sounds coming from the piano and the sight of the music on the pages in front of me. Fourth, there is the mental construct, or conception, of the sounds constituting music. My mental activity therefore makes some sense out of the sounds, and this includes the will or volition to play the music. Finally, there is an overall awareness of what is happening, an awareness of the piano, the player, the music sheet, and the music itself. This constitutes the consciousness of "playing the piano." Where is this "I" that is independent of these components? Instead of finding an "I," Buddhists discover only the *experience* itself.

As fundamental as this idea is in Buddhist thought, however, from a practical point of view this has little force in ordinary conversation. For instance, Buddhists still believe in some form of continued existence after death. And in many contexts, the term "soul" is still used to refer to this rebirth. We see this in the Japanese practice of *mizuko kuyo*, literally meaning "water children rites," the memorial service offered in Buddhist temples in which parents of an aborted fetus pray for the "soul" of their "baby."⁴ For Buddhists, what is reborn is like a "stream of consciousness" that comprises the karma accumulated over numerous lifetimes. In a sense, some sort of "character" is reborn, yet this character is not permanent nor is it private. This question of the relationship between Buddhist rebirth and *anatman* remains one of the most puzzling ideas in Buddhism.

MAKING MORE SENSE OF NO-SELF

Interconnectedness We can situate *anatman* within the Buddhist teaching of dependent origination, called *pratityasamutpada*. What this means is that all things in existence are so intimately connected with each other that all things affect everything else. No events happen in isolation. Existence is an intricate web of mutual and symbiotic cause-and-effect. Once we cast a pebble into a calm lake, it sends out a ripple effect that reaches onto the shore. Yet the stone's ripple effect does not end with the shore. It continues to affect all aspects of the environment in subtle but meaningful ways. As we shall see in our final chapter, all this has profound implications for the environment. Our human actions produce their ripple effects upon our environment and upon all other sentient beings.

The innate interconnectedness of *pratityasamutpada* helps to explain why the idea of individualism and individual rights is foreign in Buddhist cultures. Interconnectedness emphasizes notions of duty and obligation rather than rights and thus subordinates the idea of individual autonomy, a key moral precept in the West that we have seen highlighted through Kant's discussion of the "person" as a moral agent. In this way, *pratityasamutpada* holds us accountable and duty-bound to all sentient beings.

Nirvana According to Buddhists, as long as we remain under the illusion of a separate, permanent self, we will experience countless rebirths. Enlightenment comes about when "I" awaken to the truth that *there is no "I."* This awakening is called *nirvana*, which literally means "extinguishing," as in extinguishing a flame. What is extinguished is the false sense of an individual, private, and permanent self-entity. If and when I experience nirvana, I am then liberated from the wheel of birth, death, and rebirth. Here we see a radical difference from Hindu thought. For Hindus, the highest experience, *moksha*, entails an awakening to one's genuine self, *atman*. In contrast, for Buddhists, because there is no *atman*, the ultimate experience, nirvana, consists in awakening to the fact of the illusion of self.

When Shoko Asahara returned from a visit to India and Tibet in 1986, he publicly announced that he had experienced nirvana while meditating in Tibet. He then proceeded to engage in a full-fledged marketing campaign to tout his alleged nirvana experience. After visiting the Dalai Lama in the following year, he then claimed to be the new Buddha, not only for the salvation of Japan, but for the whole world. This is a far cry from the selflessness experienced in nirvana.

■ THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The Four Noble Truths remain the pivotal teaching in Buddhism and provide an existential context for Buddhist ethics. Through these truths, the Buddha acts as our physician, first conveying to us his diagnosis of our human condition, and then offering us a way to be healed from our condition.

THE FIRST TRUTH: SUFFERING IS UNIVERSAL

The Buddha describes this first Truth of suffering (*dukkha*):

... *this is the Noble Truth of Sorrow. Birth is Sorrow, age is sorrow, disease is sorrow, death is sorrow; contact with the unpleasant is sorrow, separation from the pleasant is sorrow, every wish unfulfilled is sorrow — in short all the five components of individuality are sorrow.*⁵

Dukkha is ubiquitous. Consider the world scandal of poverty. The celebrated Thai activist and cofounder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, Sulak Sivaraksa, reminds us that of the more than forty thousand people who die each day from undernourishment and starvation, at least 75 percent of them are children.⁶

THE SECOND TRUTH: THE SOURCE OF SUFFERING LIES IN CRAVING

What is the cause of our suffering? The root cause of suffering is *tanha* (*trishna* in Sanskrit), which literally means “desire,” “thirst,” and “craving.” “Craving” comes closer to the meaning of *tanha*, for craving represents the extreme manifestation of desire. Recall how Kisagotami literally clung to her dead baby boy. As the Buddha states,

*this is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Sorrow. It arises from craving, which leads to rebirth, which brings delight and passion, and seeks pleasure now here, now there — the craving for sensual pleasure, the craving for continued life, the craving for power.*⁷ [emphasis added]

The Buddha singles out three distinct objects of craving: sensual pleasure, continued life, and power. Underlying these three is an even deeper object

of our craving—ideas, whether it is an *idea* of what constitutes pleasure, *ideas* regarding continued life, or *ideas* about power and control. Since our minds give birth to our ideas, the driving force in all of this is mind. And when we cling to an idea, we become attached to it. When we become attached to an idea, that idea takes us over. We no longer *have* the idea. The idea *has us*. Witness the opening scene in our chapter on utilitarianism where Alice Melling and her crew of IRA terrorists are ensnared by the idea of “freedom for all Ireland, at any cost.”

Shoko Asahara’s actions clearly demonstrated his craving for power, privilege, and material comforts. He charged outrageous fees for certain “religious aids” such as his bathwater for ¥100,000 (about \$1,000) per liter, calling it “Miracle Pond”! The sect also sold a tiny vial that allegedly contains Asahara’s own blood for the incredible fee of ¥1,000,000, or about \$10,000. The buyer is supposed to drink the blood in order to acquire some of the “the Master’s” powers. There is also the PSI, or Perfect Salvation Initiation, a “telepathy headgear” with all sorts of wiring that can be rented for ¥1,000,000 a month! The device supposedly enables the wearer to be on the same brain wavelength as “the Master.”⁸

THE THIRD TRUTH: WE CAN FREE OURSELVES FROM SUFFERING

Note that the source of suffering, our tendency to cling and to grasp, lies within us. We ourselves create our suffering. Thus, there is a window of hope that would not exist if the cause were external and therefore beyond our control. Of the five components we discussed earlier, the mental faculty of volition, or will, generates our tendency to crave or to cling. But volition by its very nature can be controlled. How? It is precisely *through* our mental faculty that we can exert some control over our mental faculty. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was virtually stone-deaf by 1817. Yet he managed to compose masterpieces like his string quartets and *Ninth Symphony*, relying on his inner ear as well as sight in order to “hear.” My mind can free me from my mind. How is this possible? Only if we can extricate ourselves from the illusion of self. The key lies in uncovering the ontological error of an independent and permanent “I.” As long as we sustain the illusion of “I,” we will continue to crave. The key lies in waking up to the truth of *anatman*. Yet this is the most difficult course to pursue.

THE FOURTH TRUTH: THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

The Eightfold Path is the centerpiece of Buddhist morality. If we diligently follow this path, we can liberate ourselves from the condition of suffering that we in effect impose upon ourselves. The Buddha shows us the way, but only we can follow it. The Eightfold Path consists in these steps:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| • right view | • right livelihood |
| • right resolve | • right effort |
| • right speech | • right mindfulness |
| • right conduct | • right concentration |

Not only do these steps impact upon each other, but they incorporate the harmony of mental activity (right view, right resolve, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration) and bodily behavior (right speech, right conduct, right livelihood), mind and body.

Right View Right view requires that we embrace the Three Signs and the Four Noble Truths. Otherwise, we fall victim to what Buddhists call the Four Perverse Views:

- clinging to permanence
- enjoying another's suffering
- clinging to a self
- having false beliefs about beauty⁹

For example, if we cannot accept *anicca*, our attachment to a false sense of permanence pervades our understanding of things and explains why we can remain attached to an idea of a permanent self, an idea that is for us an anchor in this sea of impermanence.

Right Resolve Right resolve means having the disposition needed to pursue the path and therefore underscores attitude and purity of intention. Right resolve is also called right "thought." Right thought requires having the proper conception of thought itself. Right thought is a sort of critical "self-scrutiny" of *how* one thinks and *what* one thinks about. It is an epistemological critique of our process of understanding, and underlying all this is the need to be free of any notion of a permanent, independent self, or "thinker."

Right Speech Speech indicates character. Right speech is speech that is harmonious. It avoids any negativity such as deceit, cursing, gossiping, and spreading rumors. Right speech ultimately means that we should speak in ways that alleviate suffering. The Buddha lays the groundwork for right speech in his *Discourse to Prince Abhaya* when he asks the prince to consider three fundamental questions regarding speech: Is it true? Is it gracious? Is it useful?¹⁰ According to the renowned German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), much of our speech consists of "idle talk." His view comes close to what the Buddha was getting at. In his classic *Being and Time*, Heidegger states:

What is said-in-the-talk as such, spreads in wider circles and takes on an authoritative character. Things are so because one says so. Idle talk is constituted by just such gossiping and passing the word along — a process by which its initial lack of grounds to stand on becomes aggravated to complete groundlessness. . . .

The groundlessness of idle talk is no obstacle to its becoming public; instead it encourages this. Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own.¹¹

Right Conduct Right conduct helps to alleviate the suffering of all sentient creatures. It forbids any behavior that brings about *unnecessary harm* and thus prohibits injuring others, stealing, destroying property, living unchastely, self-debasement, and any other actions that spawn suffering. The *Majjhima-nikaya* describes how, while instructing his son Rahula, the Buddha uses the image of a mirror to show him the vital relationship between behavior and reflection:

What do you think about this, Rahula? What is the purpose of a mirror?

Its purpose is reflection, reverend sir.

Even so, Rahula, a deed is to be done with the body [only] after repeated reflection; a deed is to be done with speech . . . with the mind [only] after repeated reflection.¹²

Especially in light of the interconnectedness of all things, our actions in some way impacts upon all others, and we need to reflect upon this before we act.¹³

Right Livelihood Right livelihood pertains to the life choices we make regarding our careers. First, does our career promote happiness or does it bring about suffering? Buddhists warn against becoming warriors or butchers. The preoccupation of Aum scientists with producing sarin nerve gas at their Kamikuishiki complex unreservedly violates right livelihood. And in 1992, after purchasing a machine factory in Ishikawa Prefecture, Aum members made parts for AK-74 assault rifles. Second, does our career arouse unhealthy attachments? Do we choose careers that reinforce attachments? Expending energies to enhance our material comfort may mean denying or remaining ignorant of the bigger picture, the more global view that exposes worldwide famine, disease, and poverty.

Right Effort The mind can be a wild beast that enslaves us, or it can be our vehicle to attain our goal. It depends upon our volition or will. Volition can be our undoing, or it can be our lifeline. Right effort requires guarding the mind through volition against forces that distract and pull us away from our goal of liberation. We can rationalize to ourselves any action that we take, hence, the power of the mind. This capacity for self-vindication bares itself in the interior conflict between what we desire and what we value. Desires, temporary by nature, can be so powerful that they can drive us to do things we would not do under the rule of reason. To think that I am a passive tool of my mind is wrongheaded. Right effort means realizing our capacity to control our mind. It reclaims for us our proper compass so that we stay on the right track.

Right Mindfulness In the course of day-to-day activities, we generally take for granted our bodies and our minds. Are we aware of our posture, the way we walk, the way we sit, where our hands are, what we do with our bodies while we're doing it? The same can be said for mind. Our minds speed ahead with thoughts of work, deadlines, and meetings, but are we reflecting, or are we simply caught up in our thoughts? Right mindfulness requires that we be fully aware of both body and mind and demands that we keep both in balance. Although this balance is possible, it demands discipline, patience, and proper meditation, or *dhyana*. In Buddhist tradition, the practice of meditation is all-important especially because it seeks to sustain the unity of mind and body.¹⁴

Right Concentration It is through the mind that we can be free from the mind. When we are free from the mind, we reach a state called *samadhi*, the term for right concentration. This is a state of pure con-

sciousness, a condition of "neither-perception-nor-nonperception," a state that is reached when I have abolished the conventional dualistic tendency to think of a natural difference between the observer and the observed, the "I" and the object. This requires enduring practice and patience and is immensely difficult in our culture, which flourishes on the quick fix and immediate gratification. The Buddhist scholar Walpola Rahula outlines four steps in the attainment of *samadhi*.¹⁵ First, we purge all negative thoughts and keep positive thoughts. Second, we eliminate thoughts altogether in order to release our minds from the hold of intellect. The third step requires that we purge our minds of the feelings of joy and happiness. Finally, we remove from our minds *all* sensations so that we enter a state of pure consciousness, pure awareness, without any thoughts or sensations to distract us. This is a state of pure equanimity, the absence of any dualism between subject and object and of any notion of a distinct and separate "I" or self.

■ THE MIDDLE WAY

Despite having a wife, a son, and all the blessings of family life, Siddhartha Gautama felt a profound discontent in his heart that gnawed away at him so that he decided to leave his family and embark upon his own personal search. He journeyed for many months in the forest and joined a group of wandering Hindu ascetics. In order to attain *moksha*, or spiritual enlightenment, these ascetics practiced all sorts of bodily deprivation including fasting, and to no avail. Siddhartha eventually abandoned the group and journeyed on his own.

According to legend, weary and emaciated, he passed out under a tree. That same day, a maiden, who regularly made a habit of leaving offerings for the gods under the tree, came upon the sleeping figure and believed him to be a god incarnate. She left the food there for him. Upon waking up, Siddhartha discovered the food and, eating portions of it, slowly regained his bodily strength and mental concentration. He then experienced a most profound insight. He realized that the path to enlightenment cannot lie through bodily deprivation, the ascetic path, nor can it lie through bodily indulgence, his former lifestyle at home. The way to enlightenment avoids these two extremes, and this is the Middle Way to salvation. He then committed himself to staying under what is now known as the Bodhi tree, and meditated until he reached his enlightenment.

As the cornerstone of Buddhist ethics, the Middle Way requires that we live a life of balance. Here we see a strong likeness with Aristotle's view of

virtue. Recall that for Aristotle, virtue avoids the extremes of excess and deficit. The Buddha knew firsthand that attachment to either extreme embodies an attachment to self, for the illusory self is the driving force behind both the desire for excess and the desire for deprivation. As the Buddha states, "All mortification is vain so long as self remains, so long as self continues to lust after either worldly or heavenly pleasures."¹⁶

In American culture, excess continues to be the norm in many ways, from fashion to food. A student in my class from the war-torn country of Bosnia expressed amazement at her American roommate's daily habit of showers. Such excess seduces us into mistaking what we *desire* with what we really *need*. And slipping into the other extreme of deficit is equally dangerous. Not only does bodily deprivation endanger health, but it also enslaves one in a prison of self-absorption. Consider our culture's obsession with beauty as thinness. The Buddhist text *Vinaya-pitaka* tells the story of the monk Sona, a lute player before he entered the monastery. Obsessed with seeking enlightenment, he engaged in self-deprivation and practiced walking meditation so strenuously that his feet bled. At one point, the Buddha addressed Sona:

"Now what do you think, when the strings of your lute became too tight, could you get the right tune, or was it fit to play?"

"No indeed, Sir."

"Likewise, when the strings became too slack, could you get the right tune or was it then fit to play?"

"No indeed, Sir."

"But when the strings were neither too tight nor too slack but were keyed to an even pitch, then did it give the right tune?"

"Yes indeed, Sir."

"Even so, Sona, too much zeal conduces to restlessness and too much slackness conduces to mental sloth." So saying, the Master admonished the young monk to strike a balance between these two extremes and develop an even tempo of spiritual equilibrium.¹⁷

The Buddha offers us a positive attitude toward material and physical comfort so long as it is in moderation. As he states in his Sermon at Benares, the key is moderation:

But to satisfy the necessities of life is not evil. To keep the body in good health is a duty, for otherwise we shall not be able to trim the

*lamp of wisdom, and keep our mind strong and clear. This is the middle path, O bhikshus, that keeps aloof from both extremes.*¹⁸

The second-century Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna's landmark work, *Madhyamika Karika* ("Fundamentals of the Middle Way"), is surely one of the most influential works in Buddhist philosophy.¹⁹ Here Nagarjuna gives another twist to the Middle Way by situating it within the context of the Buddhist idea of *sunyata*, or "emptiness." *Sunyata* essentially means that all things and all sentient beings are void of a permanent substance and therefore lack a permanent self-entity. At the same time, things and beings do exist. The Middle Way therefore avoids the extremes of materialism, which claims that only the material matters, and nihilism, which asserts that the material and physical count for nothing.

THE SUPREME VIRTUES AND MIDDLE WAY

Buddhists point to an inseparable link between insight and action, wisdom and morality. As the Buddha tells his disciple Ananda, "So you see, Ananda, good conduct gradually leads to the summit."²⁰ *Nirvana*, the annihilation of the illusion of self, can only be achieved by living virtuously. Along these lines, these four supreme virtues embody the prescription of the Middle Way:

- compassion, *karuna*
- lovingkindness, *metta*
- sympathetic joy, *mudita*
- impartiality, *upekkha*²¹

Compassion The Theravada ideal was to become an *arhat*, a person who achieves perfect insight into his or her true nature. Upon experiencing this nirvana, the *arhat* would be liberated from the wheel of birth, death, and rebirth. The *arhat* depicted the virtue of wisdom, or *prajna*, and the Theravada school considered wisdom as the highest virtue. In contrast, the Mahayana ideal was to become a *bodhisattva*, one who achieves nirvana yet decides to reenter the cycle of birth and death in order to help free others from suffering. The *bodhisattva* chooses to do so out of compassion for all sentient beings and therefore embodies both wisdom and compassion.

Eventually, all Buddhists have come to think of compassion as the consummate virtue. As the *bodhisattva* demonstrates, compassion not only

means the ability to *feel* the suffering of another, but also requires that we *commit ourselves to alleviating* the suffering of others. In our selection at the end of the chapter, the seventh-century Buddhist Shantideva says of the *bodhisattva*, "He will not lay down his arms of enlightenment because of the corrupt generations of men, nor does he waver in his resolution to save the world because of their wretched quarrels."²²

This commitment to alleviate suffering is ultimately what Buddhist ethics is all about. It requires us to detach ourselves from the illusion of permanence and self. The metaphysical principle of dependent origination supports this further by underscoring that the "other" is not really "other" but is also "myself." In this way, the suffering of the "other" is also "my" suffering.

This compassion represents the Middle Way. It avoids drawing a clear distinction between myself and the other so that I convince myself that "I" am not the "other." In such a way, I harden my heart to the experiences of the other. Compassion also avoids my identifying totally with the other so that I cannot effectively do anything to remedy the suffering.

Lovingkindness Lovingkindness requires cultivating the inner disposition to seek the well-being of all others. Though it is easier to be concerned about the well-being of those whom we love, those closest to us, Buddhists urge that we foster this same attitude toward *all* beings, even our enemies.

This virtue illustrates the Middle Way. On the one hand, total identification with the other interferes with the perspective necessary to ascertain others' best interests. On the other hand, lovingkindness requires that we avoid indifference to the other, in which case all that matters to me is my own satisfaction. This is challenging in our culture where self-absorption is nearly raised to the level of a virtue.

Lovingkindness is synonymous with the Buddhist and Hindu principle of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence. Shoko Asahara, however, interpreted Buddhist teachings in convenient ways. For instance, the Tibetan Tantra Vajrayana Buddhist notion of *phoa* means that prayers to the dying person can bring about positive karma for the soul of that person and help raise that soul to a higher spiritual level. Asahara gave a perverse twist to this idea. He claimed that killing persons who are evil or who participate in evil systems would release them from their negative karma, and would bring about needed positive karma for their souls. Those who kill these "evil" persons would actually be performing a sort of "mercy killing."²³ At the same time, those who do the killing would bring upon themselves spiritual merit.

In 1989, parents of Aum members claimed that their adult children were being brainwashed into donating monies. They hired a young and energetic lawyer, Tsutsumi Sakamoto, who vigorously spoke out against the cult. Within weeks, he, his wife, and their year-old child were missing from their Yokohama apartment. Six years later, months after the nerve gas attack, their remains were found in makeshift graves far from Yokohama. Confessions by Aum members revealed that six men murdered the family under Asahara's orders. His twisted use of *phoa* and his self-inflation completely contradicts the virtue of lovingkindness. It also runs counter to the virtue of sympathetic joy.

Sympathetic Joy Though it is easy to share in the happiness of those whom we love, can we share in the joy of strangers? Of enemies? This is what sympathetic joy requires. It assumes the deep ontological and metaphysical truth of interconnectedness. Sharing in another's happiness is a natural by-product of this interconnectedness since the so-called "other" is really "myself." *Pratityasamutpada* and *anatman* convey the Buddhist teaching that we are all of the same essence, and we all share the same Buddha nature.

As with the first two virtues, sympathetic joy represents the Middle Way. In the first place, it avoids indulging totally in the happiness of others, for this absorption is actually a disguised form of self-indulgence. In addition, it avoids the other extreme of indifference toward the happiness of another as well as resentment of another's good fortune.

Impartiality The *Visuddhimagga* tells of an encounter between bandits and four monks, or *bhikkus* (literally meaning "beggars").

Suppose a person is sitting in a place with a dear, a neutral, and a hostile person, himself being the fourth; then bandits come to him and say, "Venerable sir, give us a bhikku," and on being asked why, they answer "So that we may kill him and use the blood of his throat as an offering," then if that bhikku thinks "Let them take this one, or this one," he has not broken down the barriers. And also if he thinks "Let them take me but not these three," he has not broken down the barriers either. Why? Because he seeks the harm of him whom he wishes to be taken and seeks the welfare of the others only. But it is when he does not see a single one among the four people to be given to the bandits and he directs his mind impartially towards himself and towards those three people that he has broken down the barriers.²⁴

Impartiality means "breaking down the barriers." *Upekkha*, translated as "equanimity" and "neutrality," requires a "steady mind," one not swayed by any ties. This may well be the most difficult thing for us to achieve because we naturally tend to discern differences. Note the Middle Way here in which impartiality avoids the one extreme whereby we become so impartial that we have complete indifference toward all things and all creatures. It also avoids the other extreme of blatant prejudice. Buddhists were the most outspoken opponents of the Hindu caste system. The Buddha believed that this caste separation led to spiritual elitism. The *Brahman* caste, being the highest, may tend to view themselves as more spiritually advanced than the other castes. And the fifth caste, *panchamas*, or *harijans* ("children of God") as Mahatma Gandhi called them, continue to suffer intense discrimination in India.

Asahara at first proclaimed himself to be the new Buddha for Japan. In the late 1980s, he broadened his mission to include the whole world and added an apocalyptic flavor to his role. He viewed all nonbelievers, particularly America, much of Japan, rival Japanese religions, Jews, and Freemasons, as enemies of Aum. This divisive rhetoric provided the rationale for the cult's later terrorist actions. Instead of "breaking down the barriers," Asahara's teachings erected unbridgeable barricades, a far cry from the spirit of impartiality.

These virtues are relevant on a broader, political level. Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi, born in 1945, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her defense of human rights against Burma's military regime. In the spirit of Buddhist and Gandhi's teachings regarding nonviolent resistance against corrupt government, she endured hunger strikes and imprisonment. She was finally released in July 1995 after six years in detention. As we see in the selection "In Quest of Democracy," she reminds us that the principles of good government have their basis in Buddhist teachings, as outlined in the "Ten Duties of Kings." These duties embody the supreme virtues. Aung San Suu Kyi remains a living legacy of Buddhist social ethics as she continues in her struggle for human rights.

■ WEAKNESSES IN BUDDHIST ETHICS

Does Buddhism justify acts of violence? It is clearly the case that the Aum Shinrikyo attack violates the principle of *ahimsa* and the prohibition of unnecessary harm. Yet, Buddhism's history is spotted with incidents where violence appeared to be sanctioned. In medieval Japan, there were territorial feuds among Buddhist temples and many Japanese Buddhists were

armed for defense. Kofukuji Temple's monk-warriors enabled the temple to acquire control over the region of Nara for hundreds of years. In 1959, a Buddhist monk assassinated the prime minister of Sri Lanka, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, on supposedly religious grounds. And armed uprisings by Buddhist monks often led to the overthrow of corrupt governments in Sri Lanka. Buddhists have defended these uprisings as actions against corrupt governments and rulers.²⁵

But where does Buddhism draw the line between those acts of violence that are justified and those that are not? Many Buddhists are opposed to any form of violence. The Dalai Lama, for one, prohibits the use of arms, even in cases of self-defense. And Buddhist teachings generally proscribe intentional killing. Yet if one kills in an act of self-defense, is the killing intentional? And what precisely distinguishes necessary from "unnecessary harm"? As we can see throughout this work, this lack of precise delineation exists in other traditions as well.

Another weakness is that the Buddhist virtue of impartiality seems rather naive in view of our human nature. We humans are naturally discriminatory. This is certainly the case from a purely phenomenological viewpoint. My visual perspective of Sanshiro Pond on the University of Tokyo campus is determined by where I am standing in relationship to the pond. My colleague, although he stands next to me, will naturally have a distinct and different visual perspective, even if only slight, since he cannot occupy my standpoint. My perspective and understanding regarding religious terrorism is my own because I am who I am and no one else can be me. It naturally differs from that of a militant member of Aum Shinrikyo.

Along these same lines, Buddhists urge us to assign equal moral weight to all sentient creatures. Is this not counterintuitive and even unnatural? Should we not love our family and friends more so than strangers? Is it not natural and actually more humane to treat those closer to us with greater moral weight?

Here is a third flaw. According to Buddhists, there is no independent self. Combined with *pratityasamutpada*, this notion helps to enhance the belief in our essential connectedness with each other. Yet, this same idea can also generate complete self-effacement. That is, stressing our collective identity could also lead to minimizing the importance of the individual.

A few days after the sarin gas attack, police raided Aum's chemical laboratory and weapons hideout in Kamikuishiki. When they broke into the complex, they came upon at least fifty Aum members who were so emaciated that they needed medical treatment. These members had given up their worldly possessions to the cult, and they also gave up their health,

existing on meager provisions. If the Middle Way steers us away from the extreme positions, how does the belief in *anatman* embody this Middle Way? That is, how can we maintain the notion of *anatman* while striking a balance between collective and personal interests? It seems that Buddhist cultures have gone to the extreme in overemphasizing the collective at the expense of the personal.

■ STRENGTHS IN BUDDHIST ETHICS

The Middle Way urges us to live a life of harmony. When we get caught up in extreme positions, we lose sight of perspective. The Spanish philosopher George Santayana once defined a “fanatic” as “one who has redoubled his efforts, but who has also lost his goal.” Buddhist ethics fundamentally warns us against falling victim to our own zeal. This message is particularly appropriate now as we continue to witness various forms of militant religious extremism. Groups such as the Palestinian Hamas, the Jewish Hizbollah, and Sikh separatists have justified their use of violence by an appeal to deep-seated religious convictions and moral worldview. In the 2000 report *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, the U.S. State Department listed the most notable international terrorist organizations, more than half of which had religious ties, groups like Aum Shinrikyo, al-Jihad, Hamas, Hizbollah, and al-Qaida.²⁶ Although group members may not view themselves as terrorists, their zeal may lead to the use of force to achieve their ends. It was their total dedication to their “Master” that led Aum Shinrikyo members to inflict the poisonous sarin gas upon innocent victims. Buddhist ethics, in its genuine sense, strongly cautions us against uncritically slipping into such extremism.

A second strength is that Buddhist ethics underscores the importance of cultivating good character. This is especially stressed through the notion of no-self. There is a natural link between sound insight—insight into our true nature—and good action. Buddhist ethics centers on *being* who we truly are, on getting in touch with our pure Buddha nature. It concerns itself less with *doing* the right thing. Indeed, Buddhist ethics reminds us that we cannot separate *what* we do from *who* we are. Whereas an emphasis upon rules can lead to various types of rule worship, Buddhist ethics’ key premise rests upon cultivating good character and is thereby deeply humanistic.

Finally, as in Hinduism, there is a clear link between metaphysics and ethics. For example, *annica* affects how we see the universe—as fleeting and temporary—and thereby impacts upon moral action since the context

of our actions is now a reality that we ought not to cling to. Seriously pondering the idea of *anatman* impacts upon how we behave with each other and naturally sustains a more selfless way of being in the world with others. And the notion of *pratityasamutpada* enjoins us to treat others as ourselves and vice versa. All this engenders a more collective, communal vision of both who we in essence are and how we should behave with each other. Furthermore, it provides a sound basis for an ecological ethic. Herein lies a most valuable component in Buddhist ethics. The metaphysical groundwork of interdependence acts as a necessary corrective to our overemphasis upon individualism. It reminds us that the moral community extends beyond self and carries us beyond the private sphere of family and friends. It compels us to think in terms of community and global accountability. And in stressing that all sentient creatures comprise our moral community, it is vitally relevant for a more ecological ethic.

■ NOTES

1. Haruki Murakami, *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum and Philip Gabriel (New York: Vintage International, 2001, first published by Kodansha Ltd. as *Andaguraundo* in 1997), pp. 144–45.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 284.
3. Note that this use of *dharma* is distinct from the Hindu term *dharma* in the last chapter where *dharma* refers to sound, moral conduct. Here, it refers to the Buddha’s teachings. The text here uses the more common terms, even though some are in Pali and others are in Sanskrit.
4. There is much controversy in Japan regarding exorbitant rates of these rituals along with criticism that such temples are exploiting the parents’ grief.
5. From Samyutta Nikaya, 5:421ff, in William Theodore de Bary, ed., *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1969), p. 16.
6. Sulak Sivaraksa, *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*, ed. Tom Ginsberg (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1992), p. 28.
7. From Samyutta Nikaya, in de Bary, p. 16.
8. Brackett, pp. 72–74.
9. See *Anguttaranikaya* 4, 49, 1, in Hans Wolfgang Schumann, *Buddhism: An Outline of Its Teachings and Schools* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1973), p. 69.

10. See the *Abhayar_jakum_ra-sutta* and the discussion in David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992, pp. 50–52.
11. From Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), pp. 212–13.
12. From *Majjhima-nikaya* 1.415, in Kalupahana, p. 106.
13. Ibid.
14. One of the most important Buddhist meditative techniques is *vipassana*, which literally means “insight.” This technique cultivates complete awareness of four domains: bodiliness, feelings and sensations, ideas, and mind.
15. Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 2nd ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1974), pp. 48–49.
16. From the Buddha’s Sermon at Benares, in Lucien Stryk, ed., *World of the Buddha: A Reader* (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1968), p. 50.
17. From the *Vinaya-pitaka*, in Stryk, pp. 211–12.
18. In Stryk, pp. 50–51.
19. He represents the Mahayana school of Buddhism, a school that resulted from a dispute within the early, more conservative school called Theravada. The Mahayana and the Theravada remain the two major Buddhist schools. The Mahayana school purports to be more faithful to the Buddha’s genuine teachings and gave itself the name “Mahayana,” which literally means “greater vehicle,” “vehicle” referring to the Buddha’s teachings. Mahayana labeled the original Theravada school “Hinayana,” meaning “small vehicle.” Nagarjuna was Mahayana’s most brilliant apologist.
20. In *Anguttara-nikaya*, V.2, cited in Gunapala Dharmasiri, *Fundamentals of Buddhist Ethics* (California: Golden Leaves, 1989), p. 22.
21. See the discussion in Dharmasiri, pp. 42ff.
22. From Shantideva’s *Compendium of Doctrine (Siksamuccaya)*, in de Bary, p. 84.
23. See Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 114.
24. From *Visuddhimagga*, 305–07, in Dharmasiri, p. 47.
25. See the discussion in Juergensmeyer, pp. 112–13.
26. See <http://web.nps.navy.mil/~library/tgp/tgpn dx.htm>.

FROM COMPENDIUM OF DOCTRINE

SHANTIDEVA

THE SUFFERING SAVIOR

The bodhisattva is lonely, with no . . . companion, and he puts on the armor of supreme wisdom. He acts himself, and leaves nothing to others, working with a will steeled with courage and strength. He is strong in his own strength . . . and he resolves thus:

“Whatever all beings should obtain, I will help them to obtain. . . . The virtue of generosity is not my helper—I am the helper of generosity. Nor do the virtues of morality, patience, courage, meditation and wisdom help me—it is I who help them.¹ The perfections of the bodhisattva do not support me—it is I who support them. . . . I alone, standing in this round and adamant world, must subdue Māra, with all his hosts and chariots, and develop supreme enlightenment with the wisdom of instantaneous insight!” . . .

Just as the rising sun, the child of the gods, is not stopped . . . by all the dust rising from the four continents of the earth . . . or by wreaths of smoke . . . or by rugged mountains, so the bodhisattva, the Great Being, . . . is not deterred from bringing to fruition the root of good, whether by the malice of others, . . . or by their sin or heresy, or by their agitation of mind. . . . He will not lay down his arms of enlightenment because of the corrupt generations of men, nor does he waver in his resolution to save the world because of their wretched quarrels. . . . He does not lose heart on account of their faults. . . .

“All creatures are in pain,” he resolves, “all suffer from bad and hindering karma . . . so that they cannot see the Buddhas or hear the Law of Righteousness or know the Order. . . . All that mass of pain and evil karma I take in my own body. . . . I take upon myself the burden of sorrow; I resolve to do so; I endure it all. I do not turn back or run away, I do not tremble. . . . I am not afraid . . . nor do I despair. Assuredly I must bear the burdens of all beings . . . for I have resolved to save them all. I must set them all free, I must save the whole world from the forest of birth, old age, disease, and rebirth, from misfortune and sin, from the round of birth and death, from the toils of heresy. . . . For all beings are caught in the net of craving, encompassed by ignorance, held by the desire for existence; they are doomed to destruction, shut in a cage of

1. These six, generosity (*dāna*), moral conduct (*śīla*), patience (*kṣānti*), courage or energy (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) are the *Pāramitās*, or virtues of the bodhisattva, which he has developed to perfection. Many sources add four further perfections—“skill in knowing the right means” to take to lead individual beings to salvation according to their several characters and circumstances (*upāyakauśalya*), determination (*pranidhāna*), strength (*bala*), and knowledge (*jñāna*). Much attention was concentrated on these perfections, especially on the Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*), which was personified as a goddess, and after which numerous Buddhist texts were named.

pain . . . ; they are ignorant, untrustworthy, full of doubts, always at loggerheads one with another, always prone to see evil; they cannot find a refuge in the ocean of existence; they are all on the edge of the gulf of destruction.

"I work to establish the kingdom of perfect wisdom for all beings. I care not at all for my own deliverance. I must save all beings from the torrent to rebirth with the raft of my omniscient mind. I must pull them back from the great precipice. I must free them from all misfortune, ferry them over the stream of rebirth.

"For I have taken upon myself, by my own will, the whole of the pain of all things living. Thus I dare try every abode of pain, in . . . every part of the universe, for I must not defraud the world of the root of good. I resolve to dwell in each state of misfortune through countless ages . . . for the salvation of all beings . . . for it is better that I alone suffer than that all beings sink to the worlds of misfortune. There I shall give myself into bondage, to redeem all the world from the forest of purgatory, from rebirth as beasts, from the realm of death. I shall bear all grief and pain in my own body, for the good of all things living. I venture to stand surety for all beings, speaking the truth, trustworthy, not breaking my word. I shall not forsake them. . . . I must so bring to fruition the root of goodness that all beings find the utmost joy, unheard of joy, the joy of omniscience. I must be their charioteer, I must be their leader, I must be their torchbearer, I must be their guide to safety. . . . I must not wait for the help of another, nor must I lose my resolution and leave my tasks to another. I must not turn back in my efforts to save all beings nor cease to use my pain. And I must not be satisfied with small successes."

[From *Sikṣāsamuccaya*, pp. 278–83]

THE LOST SON

A man parted from his father and went to another city; and he dwelt there many years. . . . The father grew rich and the son poor. While the son wandered in all directions [begging] in order to get food and clothes, the father moved to another land, where he lived in great luxury . . . wealthy from business, money-lending, and trade. In course of time the son, wandering in search of his living through town and country, came to the city in which his father dwelled. Now the poor man's father . . . forever thought of the son whom he had lost . . . years ago, but he told no one of this, though he grieved inwardly, and thought: "I am old, and well advanced in years, and though I have great possessions I have no son. Alas that time should do its work upon me, and that all this wealth should perish unused! . . . It would be bliss indeed if my son might enjoy all my wealth!"

Then the poor man, in search of food and clothing, came to the rich man's home. And the rich man was sitting in great pomp at the gate of his house, surrounded by a large throng of attendants . . . on a splendid throne, with a foot-

stool inlaid with gold and silver, under a wide awning decked with pearls and flowers and adorned with hanging garlands of jewels; and he transacted business to the value of millions of gold pieces, all the while fanned by a fly-whisk. . . . When he saw him the poor man was terrified . . . and the hair of his body stood on end, for he thought that he had happened on a king or on some high officer of state, and had no business there. "I must go," he thought, "to the poor quarter of the town, where I'll get food and clothing without trouble. If I stop here they'll seize me and set me to do forced labor, or some other disaster will befall me!" So he quickly ran away. . . .

But the rich man . . . recognized his son as soon as he saw him; and he was full of joy . . . and thought: "This is wonderful! I have found him who shall enjoy my riches. He of whom I thought constantly has come back, now that I am old and full of years!" Then, longing for his son, he sent swift messengers, telling them to go and fetch him quickly. They ran at full speed and overtook him; the poor man trembled with fear, the hair of his body stood on end . . . and he uttered a cry of distress and exclaimed; "I've done you no wrong!" But they dragged him along by force . . . until . . . fearful that he would be killed or beaten, he fainted and fell on the ground. His father in dismay said to the men, "Don't drag him along in that way!" and, without saying more, he sprinkled his face with cold water—for though he knew that the poor man was his son, he realized that his estate was very humble, while his own was very high.

So the householder told no one that the poor man was his son. He ordered one of his servants to tell the poor man that he was free to go where he chose. . . . And the poor man was amazed [that he was allowed to go free], and he went off to the poor quarter of the town in search of food and clothing. Now in order to attract him back the rich man made use of the virtue of "skill in means." He called two men of low caste and of no great dignity and told them: "Go to that poor man . . . and hire him in your own names to do work in my house at double the normal daily wage; and if he asks what work he has to do tell him that he has to help clear away the refuse-dump." So these two men and the poor man cleared the refuse every day . . . in the house of the rich man, and lived in a straw hut nearby. . . . And the rich man saw through a window his son clearing refuse, and was again filled with compassion. So he came down, took off his wreath and jewels and rich clothes, put on dirty garments, covered his body with dust, and, taking a basket in his hand, went up to his son. And he greeted him at a distance and said, "Take this basket and clear away the dust at once!" By this means he managed to speak to his son. [And as time went on he spoke more often to him, and thus he gradually encouraged him. First he urged him to] remain in his service and not take another job, offering him double wages, together with any small extras that he might require, such as the price of a cooking-pot . . . or food and clothes. Then he offered him his own cloak, if he should want it. . . . And at last he said: "You must be cheerful my good fellow, and think of me as a father . . . for I'm older than you and you've

PART THREE: THE QUEST: OTHER TRADITIONS

done me good service in clearing away my refuse. As long as you've worked for me you've shown no roguery or guile. . . . I've not noticed one of the vices in you that I've noticed in my other servants! From now on you are like my own son to me!"

Thenceforward the householder called the poor man "son," and the latter felt towards the householder as a son feels towards his father. So the householder, full of longing and love for his son, employed him in clearing away refuse for twenty years. By the end of that time the poor man felt quite at home in the house, and came and went as he chose, though he still lived in the straw hut.

Then the householder fell ill, and felt that the hour of his death was near. So he said to the poor man: "Come, my dear man! I have great riches . . . and am very sick. I need someone upon whom I can bestow my wealth as a deposit, and you must accept it. From now on you are just as much its owner as I am, but you must not squander it." And the poor man accepted the rich man's wealth . . . but personally he cared nothing for it, and asked for no share of it, not even the price of a measure of flour. He still lived in the straw hut, and thought of himself as just as poor as before.

Thus the householder proved that his son was frugal, mature, and mentally developed, and that though he knew that he was now wealthy he still remembered his past poverty, and was still . . . humble and meek. . . . So he sent for the poor man again, presented him before a gathering of his relatives, and, in the presence of the king, his officers, and the people of town and country, he said: "Listen, gentlemen! This is my son, whom I begot. . . . To him I leave all my family revenues, and my private wealth he shall have as his own."

[From Saddharmapūṇḍarīka, 4.101 ff.]