

\*THE PERSON THE BUDDHA WOULD NOT ADMONISH\*

by Sayagyi U Chit Tin

At one time, in a conversation with a horse-trainer named Kesi, the Buddha asked him how he trained his horses.[1] Kesi[2] replied that he used mildness, harshness, and a combination of the two.[3] Next, the Buddha asked what Kesi did with a horse that would not submit to his training. "I destroy him," Kesi answered, explaining that he did not wish for such a horse to be a discredit to his teacher's clan.

Then Kesi remarked that the Buddha was the unsurpassed trainer of men. How did he train men?

The Buddha replied that he too used mildness, harshness and a combination of the two. By mildness, the Buddha explained that he meant training through good conduct of body, speech and thought with the good results of each, leading on to rebirth as a Deva or a human being. By harshness the Buddha meant showing bad conduct of the body, speech and thought and the results of each, leading on to rebirth as an animal or a wandering ghost (peta). The combination of the two was also possible.

We can infer from this that some people only need to be shown the positive way of acting and the good that results, some only need to see the results of bad actions, while others need to see both sides before they submit to training.

Kesi asked the Buddha what he would do if someone did not submit to any of these methods. "In such a case, Kesi, I destroy him," the Buddha replied. Kesi was understandably surprised by this answer. It was one thing for him, a mere horse trainer, to destroy a recalcitrant horse, but for the Buddha to destroy someone was unthinkable. "But surely the Blessed One does not take life!" he exclaimed.

"Kesi," the Buddha replied, "it is true that taking life does not become a Tathagata (Buddha). Yet, if the man to be trained does not submit to the training by mildness, by harshness or both together, then the Tathagata does not think it worthwhile to admonish that man, nor do his wise companions in leading the holy life (brahmacariya) think it worthwhile to admonish that man. This, Kesi, is destruction for a man in the noble discipline: when both the Tathagata and his companions in leading the holy life do not think it worthwhile to admonish him."

The method mentioned here can be taken as part of the first step involving the motivation for a person ready for training. It is necessary to have the right view that volitional actions will give future results, that other planes of existence actually exist and that our good or bad acts will lead to birth in a good or bad plane respectively. If this is true, then a person will be motivated to work for a good existence at the very least. This matter of right belief is so important it is the subject of the first discourse in the Sutta Pitaka.

The Buddha does not mention to Kesi that working for a good existence is not enough, that the goal should be the ending of all future births. This is probably because Kesi was not ready at that time to aim at the highest goal. An illustration of how the Buddha initially motivated some people to work for a good existence is found in his discourse to the Kalamas[4] and also in the way he taught his half-brother Nanda.[5] Nanda became a bhikkhu just after being married and soon began to long to return to lay life. The Buddha showed him the pleasures of the Deva worlds to help him get rid of his longing for the pleasures of the human world,

knowing that as he worked to attain temporary pleasures Nanda would be able to go beyond them and attain Nibbana. This can serve as an example of training with mildness.

In a very different case the Buddha used the harsh training. An actor name Talaputa had been told that through entertaining people he would be reborn in the world of the laughing devas.[6] When he sought to confirm this by asking the Buddha, the Buddha at first remained silent. This shows that the Buddha was careful not to tell people something if it would only serve to upset and depress them. Talaputa had to ask three times before the Buddha explained that an actor who provoked immoral thoughts in his audience would be reborn in a lower realm. And this knowledge motivated Talaputa to become a bhikkhu and work for true happiness.

In many places it is made clear that the Buddha only taught those who would follow his instructions, but that he also gave people every chance to see the error of their ways. A good example is the case of the quarreling bhikkhus of Kosambi[7]. Due to a misunderstanding concerning the rules, two factions of bhikkhus refused to listen to the advice of the Buddha. It was only when he saw that he could not resolve the conflict that the Buddha left the bhikkhus. When they finally came to their senses, the Buddha advised the bhikkhus with him and the lay followers who asked how to act towards the two factions: they should continue to act correctly towards both sides, but not get involved in the dispute. The conflict was eventually resolved when the bhikkhu who had broken one of the minor rules confessed his fault. But it is important to note that both sides in the argument were guilty of wrong speech in their quarreling and they almost lost contact with the Buddha because of that. They were almost destroyed. As Ven. Sariputta said, a bhikkhu who lacks respect for the Teacher cannot have respect for the Dhamma and Sangha.[8]

The Buddha is described as having compassion and loving kindness for all living beings. Even Devadatta, who had tried to kill the Buddha, realized at the end of his life that the Buddha had not cherished so much as the tip of a hair's hatred towards him.[9] If this is so, how could the Buddha turn his back on someone? We have all probably seen cases of people in difficulty who refuse to see the solution to their problem. We may have tried to help them, only to find that all our efforts were in vain. Instead of helping the other person, we might find ourselves being dragged down by them. If we realize that we are unable to help someone, then we would do better to avoid them entirely, just as the Buddha left the bhikkhus of Kosambi. The best response to someone who only wants to quarrel or stir up trouble is silence. We cannot help someone who is not ready to help himself. This is what the Buddha meant when he said that he only showed the way. He could not enlighten anyone else. But if they were ready to follow his instructions, he could show them the way to reach Nibbana by their own efforts.

It is not always easy for us to know whether we can be helpful or not to another person. A Buddha can see better than anyone else the potential a person has. Some indications of the qualities a person who can be helped will possess can be obtained from the description of the dedicated student of meditation in the Visuddhimagga:[10]if he dedicates himself to the teacher, he will be responsive to correction, he will not go about as he likes, he will be easy to speak to and will live only in dependence on the teacher. If the bhikkhus at Kosambi had had this sort of attitude, they would have stopped their quarreling the first time the Buddha corrected them.

At times, of course, a person can only learn by his own mistakes. A good example of such a person was Ven. Meghiya, who was one of the Buddha's attendants before Ven. Ananda. He insisted on meditating in a

grove where he was unable to make progress.[11] But realizing his mistake, he approached the Buddha and asked him about it. The result was that the Buddha gave him very thorough instructions for his meditation, and Meghiya was finally able to make progress. If we are aware that we have gone down the wrong path, then we should come back before it is too late. If we encounter others who have fallen into error, but who sincerely wish to begin again, and work properly, then, like the Buddha, we should welcome the opportunity to help them if we can.

The Buddha explains very plainly, "This, Kesi, is destruction for a man in the discipline of the Ariyan--when both the Tathagata and his fellows in the higher life think it not worth while to admonish him!"

When our teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin was living and teaching at the International Meditation Centre, Yangon, Myanmar, there were many occasions when he would train by mildness with sweet and gentle speech, and good food, and also by harshness with firm, strong words -- sometimes very stern words -- and also by both mildness and harshness. At such times we were at a loss to understand but always knew that his loving-kindness was so great that he could not help but follow in the foot-steps of the Buddha.

"Destroyed indeed is a person by the Teacher when he would not admonish the unfortunate person!"

So those who wish to lead a higher life should submit to the admonition of our teachers who are wise and who with much loving-kindness show us the Right Path, the Path to Liberation.

Hence, let all beware!

Sayagyi U Chit Tin

#### FOOTNOTES:

[1] GS II 116-118.

[2] F.L. Woodward translates the name by "with a mane."

[3] Woodward quotes the commentary as saying "proper regard, good food, sweet water, gentle speech" are examples of mild training and "hobbling, bridling, goading, whipping, harsh speech" are examples of harsh training.

[4] GS I 170-175.

[5] For the story of Ven. Nanda, see BL I 217-225.

[6] S IV 305f. (KS IV 214-216).

[7] See BD IV 483-513, for the complete account. The story is also given by Bhikkhu Nanamoli, //The Life of the Buddha// (BPS), pp. 109-119.

[8] GS IV 81.

[9] BL I 239.

[10] //Path//, Chapter III, 126.

[11] GS IV 234-237.

Worldwide Contact Addresses  
in the Tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin

~~~~~

- \*AUSTRIA\*: International Meditation Centre, A-9064 St. Michael/Gurk 6,  
Austria;Tel: +43 4224 2820, Fax: +43 4224 28204  
Email: CIS, IMC-Austria, 100425,3423
- \*EASTERN AUSTRALIA\*: International Meditation Centre, Lot 2 Cessnock Road,  
Sunshine NSW 2264, Australia;  
Tel: +61 49 705 433, Fax: +61 49 705 749
- \*UNITED KINGDOM\*: International Meditation Centre, Splatts House,  
Heddington, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 OPE, England;  
Tel: +44 380 850 238, Fax: +44 380 850 833,  
Email: CIS, IMC-UK,100330,3304
- \*USA (East Coast)\*: International Meditation Centre, 438 Bankard Road,  
Westminster MD 21158, USA;  
Tel: +1 410 346 7889, Fax: +1 410 346 7133;  
Email: CIS, IMC-USA, 74163,2452
- \*WESTERN AUSTRALIA\*: International Meditation Centre, Lot 78 Jacoby Street,  
Mahogany Creek WA 6072, Australia;  
Tel: +61 9 295 2644, Fax: +61 9 295 3435
- \*CANADA\*: IMC-Canada, 336 Sandowne Drive, Waterloo, Ontario, N2K 1V8,  
Canada; Tel: +1 519 747 4762, Fax: +1 519 725 2781
- \*GERMANY\*: Sayagyi U Ba Khin Gesellschaft, Christaweg 16, 79114 Freiburg,  
Germany, Tel: +49 761 465 42, Fax: +49 761 465 92
- \*JAPAN\*: Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, Komatsuri-Cho 923,  
Kishiwada-Shi, Osaka-Fu, 596 Japan, Tel: +81 724 45 0057
- \*THE NETHERLANDS\*: Sayagyi U Ba Khin Stichting, Oudegracht 124, 3511 AW  
Utrecht, The Netherlands,  
Tel: +31 30 311 445, Fax: +31 30 340 612
- \*SINGAPORE\*: Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Association, 9 Penang Road #07-12,  
Park Mall, Singapore 0923  
Tel: +65 338 6911, Fax: +65 336 7211
- \*SWITZERLAND\*: Sayagyi U Ba Khin Gesellschaft, Greyerzstrasse 35, 3013  
Bern, Switzerland;Tel: +41 31 415 233, Fax: +41 61 271 4184;  
Email: CIS, 100256,3576
- \*USA (West Coast)\*: Contact Address: IMC-USA c/o Joe McCormack,  
77 Kensington Rd., San Anselmo, CA 94960,U.S.A.  
Tel: +1 415 459 3117, Fax: +1 415 459 4837
- \*BELGIUM\*: Address as for the Netherlands, Tel: +32 2 414 1756
- \*DENMARK\*: Contact Address: Mr. Peter Drost-Nissen, Strandboulevarden  
117, 3th, 2100 Kopenhagen, Denmark. Tel: 031 425 636
- \*ITALY\*: Contact address: Mr. Renzo Fedele, Via Euganea 94, 35033  
Bresseo PD, Italy. Tel: +39 49 9900 752

-----

---

DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENT

~~~~~  
TITLE OF WORK: The Person the Buddha Would Not Admonish  
FILENAME: ADMONISH.ZIP  
AUTHOR: Sayagyi U Chit Tin  
AUTHOR'S ADDRESS: n/a  
PUBLISHER'S ADDRESS: International Meditation Centre, Splatts House,  
Heddington, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 OPE, England  
COPYRIGHT HOLDER: The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, U.K.  
DATE OF PUBLICATION: 1995  
RIGHTS & RESTRICTIONS: See paragraph below.  
DATE OF DHARMA NET DISTRIBUTION: 17 February 1995  
ORIGIN SITE: BODY DHARMA \* Berkeley CA 510/836-4717 DharmaNet (96:101/33)

The copyright holder retains all rights to this work and hereby grants electronic distribution rights to DharmaNet International. This work may be freely copied and redistributed electronically, provided that the file contents (including this Agreement) are not altered in any way and that it is distributed at no cost to the recipient. You may make printed copies of this work for your personal use; further distribution of printed copies requires permission from the copyright holder. If this work is used by a teacher in a class, or is quoted in a review, the publisher shall be notified of such use. See the title page of this work for any additional rights and restrictions that may apply.

DharmaNet International, P.O. Box 4951, Berkeley, CA 94704-4951

---

[end of file]