

給大專學生的佛法講座（二）

回答非佛弟子常問的問題

佛使尊者 講述

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五、如果有一個外國人或是信仰其他宗教的人問你：「到哪裡才可以學佛？」我們可以再一次引用佛陀的話來回答：「在色、受、想、行、識的五蘊身裡。」利用五蘊身來學佛。色、受、想、行、識五蘊匯集，就成了一個「人」。有意識就代表有感官知覺、思考等心識作用。

佛陀以五蘊身說明世界、世界的生、世界的滅、世界的息滅之道。當佛陀提到世界的生、世界的滅、世界的息滅之道時，他的意思就是一切萬法都可以在身心中找到。當下就可以學佛，不在學校、山洞、叢林、寺院學佛。這些都是外緣。在自己的五蘊身裡蓋學校，蓋大學。然後觀照、學習、探索、研究、搜尋世界的生、世界的滅（亦即苦的息滅）、世界的息滅之道。如此，是再一次體驗「四聖諦」。佛陀有時候用「世界」，有時候用「苦」這兩個不一樣的名相來說法。「世界」或「苦」的生、緣起，「世界」或「苦」的滅、完全消失，滅苦或了生死的方法、修行法門等等，都可以在五蘊身內找到，而不能在其他任何地方找到。如果有人有五蘊身以外找答案，找到的不過是書籍知識或道聽途說，都只是文字，而不是真理。可是，如果答案是在五蘊身裡找到的，那就是真理了。

所以，如果有人問你到哪才能學佛，你就回答：「在當下這個五蘊身裡。」

六、現在，爲了要能夠更了解佛法，有人可能會跟著問：「佛法可以用什麼來比喻？」

佛陀回答：「法如筏。」在當時，竹筏是常用的渡河工具，所以佛陀用竹筏來做比喻，這種比喻也更容易令人了解。其中涵義很大。我們不該執著佛法，連自己都忘了，自傲於導師、學者、博學之士的身分，貢高我慢。忘了佛法只是竹筏，難免會有這種危險。佛法是竹筏，帶著我們渡苦海。等到了彼岸之後，不要蠢到連竹筏也一起拖著走。

將佛法比喻爲竹筏，是教導我們要視佛法爲工具，而不是目的，不要執著佛法而忘卻自己。如果忘了法筏的實際作用，佛法可能會被拿來炫耀或辯論。把佛法用在競賽上，未免蹉跎光陰，終究徒勞無功。佛法，應該用來渡彼岸、跨溪流。佛法知識，應該是離苦得樂用的，切忌將佛法做不當之用，用在舌戰之上，或是在儀式、法會上才來恭敬禮拜。最後，要記得不執著，不要到達彼岸，還將佛法緊緊抱住不放，說什麼也不願放下。

七、將佛法比擬爲渡彼岸的竹筏，在家眾可以適用，出家眾也可以適用。假設，那人接下來又問：「居士學佛該學什麼？」

千萬不要浪費時間想自己的答案。如果有人用自己的想法來回答，那也無可奈何。可是，如果想回答得如法，就要說：「居士應研修佛說（空）的一切經。」經，乃佛所說法的系統結集，是佛法的核心。

好好記住「經」這個名相。經是佛說，講的不外乎是空。居士問佛：「如何修學佛法，才能得到最持久的利益和快樂？」佛陀說：「經是如來的開示，甚深、甚重要，是超越世間的工具，談的主題是空。」

「空」這個名相，乍聽之下，似乎陌生艱澀，但不該因此而氣餒，因為空在佛教中舉足輕重。請仔細地聽我解釋。「空」有很多層涵義。佛陀所說的「空」，不是物質上的空，不是說物質虛無不存在，不是的！這裡說的空，是本質、本性上的空，畢竟物質還是存在的，世間事物之多，無量無邊。但，佛陀講的空，是說事物的本質上的空，因為任何事物都沒有「我」，也不屬於一個「我」。這教法的目的，不外乎是要我們不執著。在家居士應該研習佛說的法，了解佛陀說的空。大致來說，有太多的在家居士誤解了「空」。會有這種誤解，是因為很少人願花時間去研習佛法。換言之，請切記，深入經藏，不單是比丘的工作，在家居士也要讀經。

所以，我希望，各位居士大德不要看到佛經就搖頭，或是看到「空」這個題目就退避三舍。請花時間來研讀、了解佛經，這是個需要仔細了解、詮釋的科目，非朝夕可成。我們只談論了一些核心議題、根本教義，但也夠了。總結來講，「空」指的就是無我。如果能認知到無我，心就會「空」了，就能無拘無束。「萬物萬法皆是空」，就是這個意思。

八、如果有人問你佛教中最高妙的名相「甘露法」是什麼意思？

「甘露」的意思就是不死，「甘露法」顧名思義就是不死之法。佛說：「滅貪、嗔、癡，即為甘露法。」甘露法就是指不死的境界，或使不死的道。只要有貪、嗔、癡，就是無常境界。

人生有苦。人因為有了我執，就有生、老、病、死。若滅除了貪、嗔、癡，「我」這個錯誤的概念也會隨之消失。既然無我，就不會有死。換言之，尋覓不死境界、甘露法，就是尋覓滅除貪、嗔、癡的道或法門。這些都是佛說的。我們常聽到的「甘露法」是佛教最終極、最高超的教義。其他宗教或許也講不同的不死，但在佛教，就像我剛才解釋的，不死指的是滅除貪、嗔、癡。

九、最高深、最究竟的法或真理有很多名相，假設有人問：「什麼是超越世界和死亡的最高深、最究竟的法？」

佛陀所說的「空」法，就是最高深、最究竟的法。「空」超越世界、超越死亡，亦即是甘露法（不死之法）。

可是，後人所講的法，又是什麼？

佛說：「任何人所講的法，不論是什麼階級，或是詩人雅士、博學多聞，也不論他所講的法是如何地詞句優美、文藻豐富、韻律和諧，如果講的不是空，就不是佛說的法。」請謹記「如果講的不是空」這句話。也就是說，如果有一種教法與空法無關，就是後人所造，不是佛陀所講的法，是不究竟的法。

如果我們想知道哪一項法是佛說的、是最究竟的，看看這項法有沒有講空就知道了。

十、如果有外國人問你：「根據巴利文經典所記載的，佛陀最強調什麼？」

不妨再一次引用佛陀的話來回答：「五蘊無常、無我。」任何一個生命體都是五蘊聚集而成。構成肉身的，叫「色蘊」。感官感覺，不論是舒服的還是痛苦的，都叫「受蘊」。記憶、感知的能力叫「想蘊」。主動的思考叫「行蘊」。藉由刺激眼、耳、鼻、舌、身、意六根所得到的意識作用，叫作「識蘊」。佛陀最強調的，不外乎是五蘊的無常、無我。五蘊無時無刻不在變化，所以不能稱五蘊為「我」或「我的」。

讓我再做個結論，請好好記住。佛陀最強調的，不外乎是一切萬法皆無常，皆不能稱為「我」或「我的」。

十一、接下來該討論的問題是：「佛陀教導我們該相信誰？」

如果被問到這問題，就引用《伽蘭摩經》上佛陀說的話。俗語說：「眼見為憑。」我們往往對自己眼睛看到的置信不疑。問題是眼睛看到了什麼？看，應該是要能觀照。所謂「觀照」，就是說清清楚楚地看，而不胡亂攀緣、妄想假設。看一件物體的時候，眼睛會對這件物體作認知，這樣子看，就有「觀照」的效果，不需再去作推測、揣度。佛家認為，在觀照、認清真相之前，不要輕信任何人、任何事。

藉由以下幾個問題，可以更明白這個意思。為什麼我們被警告不要輕信三藏（佛教經律論）？不要輕信導師？不要輕信報導或謠言？不要輕信理由？不要輕信邏輯推測？保持這個原則，可以幫助培養正信，因為一窩蜂地盲信是再愚蠢不過的。假設我們打開佛經，讀了一些經文，卻不去體驗、思惟其中意義，就相信了，那就是迷信三藏，也是違背了佛陀的教誨。如果相信一位導師所說的話，而不親身體驗、正念觀照，看看那個導師教導的究竟是什麼，未免就是偶像崇拜、「依人不依法」了，跟隨便相信報導或謠言沒什麼兩樣。又假設，用某種推測方法，用理由來推論，因為這是邏輯推論出來的，我們就相信了，這樣也還不夠；我們不該輕信邏輯。

但，這不意味著我們不該深入經藏，或是不該親近善知識、聽報導或謠言、做邏輯推測。這只意味凡看到的、聽到的，都要先經過一番深思熟慮、謹慎檢驗，對自己看到的、聽到的有正念覺知。

譬如，佛陀告訴我們：貪、嗔、癡是造成苦的三毒，但如果自己沒有貪、嗔、癡，就很難相信這種說法，事實上也沒必要相信。沒有貪、嗔、癡卻還相信這種說法，未免就是愚蠢了。相反地，如果有貪、嗔、癡，就會知道起貪念的時候感覺像什麼，起嗔念、癡念的感覺又像什麼；我們會知道當貪、嗔、癡生起時，心就會像被火燒一樣，苦不堪言。因為有親身體驗，就不妨相信貪、嗔、癡是苦的來源。佛經說，佛陀教導我們要觀照看到的、聽到的每樣事物，直到有正念覺知為止。如果沒辦法對那樣事物正念覺知，就先用理性來推斷，然後暫時放一邊。慢慢地，就能增長正念覺知，信心也會增加。也就是說，要先有正念覺知，然後才去相信、修行所聽聞的。佛說的法中，這是很受歡迎的一點。如果有外國人問你這個問題，要審慎回答。講錯了，就誤解了佛陀的法。不輕信佛經、不輕信導師、不輕信報導及謠言、不輕信邏輯推斷——這些話都另有引涉。真諦，是必須要尋找的，不

加思索就相信了，未免愚蠢。佛陀堅決地、明確地反對盲信。佛告訴我們，不要盲信，要檢驗、要正念觀照之後，才可以考慮相信。

輕信、盲信是再愚蠢不過的。在正念觀照之後才相信，是合理的。佛家以為，信仰是要不盲信、不依人、不靠書、不迷信、不迷邏輯、更忌人云亦云；先要有正念覺知、實際檢驗之後，才可以相信。佛家是如此認為，佛弟子需謹記。

十二、下一個問題：「在家佛教徒和真正的佛弟子之間有何不同？」

在家佛教徒和真佛弟子之間的不同，可以從幾個層面來看。「在家佛教徒」指的是從未好好學佛，也不懂什麼是正法的人。他可能名義上是信佛的，戶口調查的時候說自己是佛教徒，或是跟著父母長輩拜佛，這樣的人，只能說是「在家佛教徒」。而「真佛弟子」則是求正道的聖弟子，在修行上有成就，比尋常在家佛教徒更具正念。

佛陀幽默地說：「聖凡知見，差異很大。」所以，從佛弟子的角度、規範來看，唱歌和流淚、跳舞和發狂、大笑和幼稚行為之間等等，並沒有兩樣。佛教徒可以在沒有正念之下，照樣唱歌、跳舞、玩樂，絲毫沒有注意到青春稍縱即逝。如果仔細觀察，就會發現，當一個人竭力嘶吼、大聲歌唱的時候，那樣子跟哭泣並沒有不同。事實上，竭力嘶吼、大聲歌唱和哭泣都是出於相同的情緒。跳舞，更是狂人的行為！只要稍加注意，就會發現我們跳舞至少有一成的成分是因為瘋狂；不狂，舞就跳不起來了。可是，因為世人都認為跳舞是很好的娛樂，我們就不把跳舞當成狂人的行為。有人喜歡大笑，大笑令人愉快，就算是沒有大笑的理由或合適場合，也可能大笑。但從聖弟子的角度和規範來看，大笑卻是幼稚的行為。所以，能夠少笑就少笑點，不是所有的笑都是好的。

以上只是幾個例子，說明聖弟子和佛教徒之間的不同。在佛教徒看來，唱歌、跳舞、大笑都是沒有關係的，不會有任何繼起的後果。可是對正道上的聖弟子而言，這些都是可悲的。修行較深的人，會把以上幾個例子當成可悲的行為。

佛陀不是說不要唱歌、跳舞、大笑，佛陀只是要我們知道，種種行為都有聖凡之分，不要做不需要的行為。如果我們還稱不上是聖弟子，或許會想試試一些較低凡的行為。有些行為在某些時候令人愉悅，但終會厭倦。之後，就不妨提升自己在正道上的程度，作一名聖弟子，持正信的戒。

有些人不愛聽「戒」這個字。他們擔心，持戒會限制他們的行為，這是很苦的。然而，調伏其心，不隨情緒起伏，是佛教很重要的一點。不讓身心隨著情緒起伏，不是苦；相反的，卻是滅苦的方法。我們必須找出不讓自己陷入我執、惡念的方法，不讓心隨著惡念轉動，不讓惡念征服自己的心。只要觀照跳舞，就會看到惡念是如何在跳舞當中，降服、控制了我們。試問，這是自由嗎？

乍看之下，我們只是在設法改善自己的地位。不要做一輩子的尋常佛教徒！向佛陀社會提出申請，培養正知、正見、正念、正信，離苦得樂。不要蹉跎光陰，不做不利人、不利己的事，如此，終可成為聖弟子，在正道修行上前進。佛陀希望能有越來越多的聖弟子，不做一輩子的尋常佛教徒。（全文完）

## Buddha-Dhamma for University Students (II)

Answers to questions a non-Buddhist is likely to ask about the fundamentals of Buddhism.

by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

Translated from the Thai into English by Ariyananda Bhikkhu (Roderick. S. Bucknell)

Translated from English into Chinese by Dr. Wei-yi Cheng

5. Suppose someone from other country or religion asks you, 澁 here can one learn, where can one study?" WE CAN ANSWER THIS by quoting the Buddha once again, "In this very fathom-long body together with the perceptions and mental activities."

Learn in the human body together with perception and mental activity. This fathom-long body, being alive, is accompanied by perceptions and mental activities, all of which make up "the person". The presence of consciousness implies the presence of perceptions, and the presence of mental activities that of knowledge and thought.

In this fathom-long body together with perceptions and mental activities the Tathagata (the Buddha) made known the world, the origin of the world, the complete extinction of the world, and the way to practice in order to achieve the complete extinction of the world. When he spoke of the origin of the world, the complete extinction of the world, and the way of practice leading to complete extinction of the world, he meant that the whole Dhamma is to be found within the body and the mind. Learn here. Don't learn in a school, in a cave, in a forest, on a mountain, or in a monastery. Those places are outside us. Build a school inside, build a university within the body. Then examine, study, investigate, research, scout around, find out the truth about how the world arises, how it comes to be a source of suffering, how there may be complete extinction of the world (that is, extinction of suffering), and how to work towards attaining that complete extinction. That is, rediscover the Four Noble Truths yourself. The Enlightened One sometimes used the word "world" and sometimes the word "suffering" (dukkha). The nature of the world, of suffering; the nature of its arising, its origin and source; the nature of its complete extinction, the cessation of suffering and the turbulent world; and the nature of the practice which leads to dukkha's end: these can be searched for and found in this body and nowhere else. If one appears to have found it elsewhere, it can only be as an account in some book, hearsay, just words, and not the Truth itself. However, when it is looked for and found in this fathom-long body, together with this mind, then it will be the Truth.

So if asked where to learn, say, "We learn in this fathom-long body together with perception and the mental activities."

6. Now we may be asked next, for the sake of better understanding of the Dhamma, “To what may the Dhamma be compared?” THE BUDDHA SAID, “The Dhamma may be compared to a raft.” He used the word “raft” because in those days rafts were commonly used for crossing rivers, and this explanation of the Dhamma as a raft could be readily understood. This has a very important meaning. One should not become so attached to the Dhamma that one forgets oneself, that one becomes proud of being a teacher, a scholar, or a man of learning. If one forgets that the Dhamma is just a raft, this danger will arise. The Dhamma is a raft, a vehicle that will carry us across to the other bank. Having reached the further shore and gone up on land, we should not be so foolish as to carry the raft along with us.

This is meant to teach us to recognize and use the Dhamma as merely a means to an end, not to grasp at and cling to it to the point of forgetting ourselves. If we don't recognize the true function of this raft, we may find ourselves keeping it for show or as something to quarrel over. Sometimes it is regarded as a race to be run, which is wasteful and useless. It should be used as intended for crossing over, for crossing the stream. Knowledge of Dhamma should be used to cross over beyond suffering. It should not be retained for detrimental purposes, for fighting with that sharp-edged weapon the tongue, for arguing, or as an object of ceremonial obeisance. Finally, don't grasp at and cling to it so that, even after having reached the shore, having landed, you are not willing to leave the raft behind, but want to carry it along with you.

7. This Dhamma, which is said to resemble a raft, is just as applicable for lay people as it is for bhikkhus (monks). Suppose, then, that we are asked, “What should a lay person study?” WE SHOULD NOT waste time thinking out our own answer. If anyone wants to have his own ideas, well and good, there is nothing to stop him. But if we are to answer in accordance with what the Buddha taught, then we must say, “Lay people should study all the suttantas, that is the Discourses, of the Tathagata about (emptiness).” These suttantas are a well-organized exposition of the teaching. They constitute a good system forming the pithy substance or heart of the teaching. This is why they are called suttanta. A sutta is a “discourse” and anta means “end” Hence, a suttanta is a discourse that is well set out, well ordered, and the sound kernel of the subject. It is like the word vedanta. Veda is “knowledge”; vedanta is knowledge that is the pure substance of the matter, well set out and systematically arranged. Remember this word suttanta. All the suttantas are utterances of the Tathagata. They are what the Buddha taught and they all refer to (emptiness). In this connection, lay people ask how they are to practice Dhamma in order to achieve the most enduring benefits and happiness. The Buddha said, “The suttantas are utterances of the Tathagata, are of great profundity, have deep significance, are the means of

transcending the world, and refer to sunnata.” Sunnata. This word may seem strange to you, but don’t lose heart just yet, because it happens to be the most important word in Buddhism. Please listen carefully. The word may be translated as “emptiness” But the word “empty” has several usages and meanings. The Buddha does not mean physical emptiness. It is not a physical vacuum devoid of material substance. No! Here it is a case of emptiness in the sense of essential nature, because all sorts of things are still present. There can be as many objects as would fill up the whole world, but the Buddha taught that they are empty, or have the property of emptiness, because there is nothing in any of them that either is a self or belongs to a self. The aim of this is, once again, non-clinging to anything at all. Lay people should study in particular those sayings of the Buddha that deal with. Generally, this subject has been misunderstood as too lofty for lay people. The reason for this is simply that too few people wish to practice according to these sayings of the Buddha. So please keep clearly in mind that even a lay person must study, think about, practice, and then discover. It is not only for bhikkhus.

I hope, then, that you lay people will no longer be afraid of the word “emptiness” or of the subject of “emptiness”. Take steps to increase your knowledge and understanding of it. It is a subject requiring intricate and delicate explanation; it takes a long time. For the reason, we have discussed only the actual core of the matter, just the real essence of it and that is enough, namely, emptiness of the idea of being a self or belonging to a self. If the mind realizes that there is nothing that is a self and that there is nothing that belongs to a self, the mind is “empty” and free. “This world is empty” means just this.

8. Now suppose we are asked about the supreme word in Buddhism, “What is the amatadhamma??AMATA MEANS “DEATH-LESS?”; the amatadhamma is the dhamma (thing or state) that does not die. And what is that? The Buddha once said, “The cessation of greed, hatred, and delusion is the amatadhamma. “The amatadhamma is the immortal state, or the immortalizing state. Wherever there is greed, hatred, and delusion, that is called the mortal state.

One experiences suffering. One has the self-idea, which causes one to be subject to birth, ageing, disease, and death. When greed, hatred, and delusion cease (the ceasing of delusion being the ceasing of ignorance and misunderstanding), then there no longer arises the false concept of selfhood, then there is no more self to die. So if one is searching for the deathless state, the amatadhamma, one must search for the state or condition that is free of greed, hatred, and delusion. This is what the Buddha taught. The amatadhamma, as we have so frequently heard, is the ultimate, the highest teaching of Buddhism. The “undying” taught by other teachers is a different amata. But in Buddhism it is, as I have just explained, the cessation of greed, hatred, and

delusion.

9. The things which are linked with the highest and most profound Dhamma (Truth) are known by various names. Suppose someone raises the question: “What is the Dhamma that is the highest and most profound, that transcends the world and death in all their forms?” THE DHAMMA BUDDHA CALLED it sunnatapatisanyuta which means Dhamma that treats of sunnata or emptiness is the Dhamma at its highest and most profound. It transcends the world, transcends death, and is none other than the amatadhamma (the immortal dhamma).

Now, the newer, later versions of Dhamma -- what are they like? The Buddha said, “A discourse of any kind, of any class; though produced by a poet or a learned man; though versified, poetical, splendid, and melodious in sound and syllable; is not in keeping with the teaching if it is not connected with sunnata.” Please remember the important words “not connected with sunnata.” Therefore, if a discourse is not concerned with sunnata, it must be an utterance of a later disciple, an innovation, new Dhamma, not an utterance of the Accomplished One, and as such inferior.

If we wish to find out Dhamma which is true to the original highest teaching of the Buddha, there is no possible way other than through those accounts that refer to (emptiness).

10. Now suppose you are asked by a person from other country, “Which aspect of the teaching, as recorded in the Pali Texts, did the Buddha stress most of all?” ANSWER THE QUESTION ONCE AGAIN by quoting the Buddha. “The five khandhas are impermanent and not-self (anatta).” These five khandhas are aggregates into which an “individual” is divisible. The body aggregate is called rupa; the aggregate of feeling, both pleasurable and painful, is called vedana; memory and perception is called sanna; active thinking is called sankhara; and the consciousness that can know this or that object by way of the six senses is called vinnana. Rupa, vedana, sanna, sankhara, and vinnana; these five are called the five aggregates or khandhas. These five aggregates are impermanent and devoid of selfhood. This is the aspect of the doctrine that the Buddha stressed most of all. These five aggregates are impermanent, continually flowing, and continually changing. They are devoid of selfhood; because they are perpetually flowing, no one can consider them to be “me” or “mine”.

I shall summarize it once again. Keep this brief statement in mind. The Buddha stressed more than any other the teaching that all things are impermanent and that nothing can be considered to be “me” or “mine”.

11. Now the next thing we shall examine is this: “Whom did the Buddha teach that we should believe?” IF YOU ARE asked this, then answer with the Buddha’s advice from the Kalama Sutta. We are to believe what we clearly see for ourselves to be the case. Now it is necessary to understand what is meant by the expression “seeing clearly”. It



means seeing clearly without needing to use reasoning, without needing to speculate, without needing to make assumptions. We should see, as clearly as we see in the case of a present physical object, that, taking this and doing this, this effect is produced. This is the meaning of “seeing clearly”. There is no need to rely on reasoning or supposition. In Buddhism, we are taught not to believe anyone, not to believe anything, without having seen clearly for ourselves that the truth in question is so. We can see what is meant here from the following questions. Why are we warned not to believe the Tipitaka (the Buddhist Canon)? Not to believe a teacher? Not to believe what is reported or rumored? Not to believe what has been reasoned out? Not to believe what has been arrived at by means of logic? The principles are a help towards right understanding, because all blind credulity is foolishness. Suppose we were to open the Tipitaka and read some passage and then believe it without thinking, without testing it, without any critical examination. This would be foolish belief in the Tipitaka, which the Buddha condemned. Believing what a teacher says without having used our eyes and ears, without criticizing, and without having seen for ourselves that what he says is really so, this is what is meant here by “believing a teacher”. It is the same with believing any report or rumor that happens to arise. “Believing in what has been arrived at by way of logic” means that, having learned how to reason correctly and being experienced in reasoning we come to the conclusion that a certain proposition must be logically so. But this is still not good enough; we are not to put our trust in this sort of reasoning.

But here we must be careful and take good note that this discourse does not forbid us to read the Tipitaka. Nor does it forbid us to consult a teacher, to listen to reports and rumors, or to use logical reasoning. Rather it means that although we may have read, listened, and heard, we should not simply accept what is offered in these ways unless we have first thought it over, considered it carefully, fathomed it out, examined fully, and seen clearly for ourselves that it really is so.

For instance, the Buddha taught that greed, anger, and delusion are the causes that give rise to suffering. If we ourselves are not yet acquainted with greed, anger, and delusion, then there is no way that we can believe this, there is no need to believe it, and to believe it would, in such a case, be foolish. But when we know ourselves what greed is like, what anger is like, and what delusion is like; and that whenever they arise in the mind, they produce suffering as if they were fires burning us; then we can believe on the basis of our own experience.

So what the Buddha taught in this connection appears in the Tipitaka as follows :

Having read or having heard something, we must investigate until we have seen clearly the fact being taught. If still we don't see it clearly, we must fall back on reasoning and then leave it for a while. Then gradually, we shall come to believe and

see more and more clearly. So to start with, we shall believe and practice no more than we have seen clearly to be the case. This is a very popular teaching of the Buddha. If someone from other country asks you about it, do explain it properly. If you explain it wrongly, you may misrepresent the Buddha's teaching. Not believing the Tipitaka, not believing the teacher, not believing reports and rumors, not believing reasoning by way of logic -- these have a hidden meaning. We must search for it. To believe straight away is foolishness. The Buddha condemned this firmly and definitely. He told us not to believe until we have put it to the test and have come to see it clearly. Then we may believe.

To believe straight away is foolishness; to believe after having seen clearly is good sense. That is the Buddhist policy on belief: not to believe stupidly, not relying only on people, textbooks, conjecture, reasoning, or whatever the majority believes, but rather to believe what we see clearly for ourselves to be the case. This is how it is in Buddhism. We Buddhists make it our policy.

12. Next the question, "How do the minds of an ordinary lay person and a true Buddhist differ?" NOW WE SHALL look at a point which will give some idea of the difference in level between the mind of an ordinary lay person and the mind of a true Buddhist. "Ordinary lay person" means one who has never been a proper Buddhist and knows nothing of real and genuine Buddhism. An ordinary lay person is a Buddhist at most by name, only according to the records and according to the register, through having been born of parents who were Buddhists. This means he is still an ordinary lay person. Now, to be a "true Buddhist" to be an ariyan (one well advanced in practice, a noble one) a person must meet the requirement of having right understanding about the various things around him to a far higher degree than the ordinary lay person has.

The Buddha said humorously, Between the view of the ariyan and the view of ordinary lay people there is an enormous difference." Thus, in the view of the ariyans, in the ariyan discipline, singing songs is the same thing as weeping; dancing is the antics of madmen; and hearty laughing is the behaviour of immature children. The ordinary lay person sings, laughs, and enjoys himself without noticing when he is weary. In the discipline of the ariyans, singing is looked upon as being the same as weeping. If we observe a man who sings and shouts at the top of his voice, it not only looks the same as weeping, but, furthermore, it stems from the same emotional conditions as does weeping. As for dancing, this is the behaviour of madmen! If we are just a little observant, we will realize as we are getting up to dance, that we must surely be at least ten percent crazy or else we couldn't do it. But because it is universally considered something pleasant, we don't see it as the behavior of lunatics. Some people like to laugh; laughter is something enjoyable. People laugh a lot, even

when it is not reasonable or appropriate. But laughing is regarded by the ariyan, and in their discipline, as the behavior of immature children. So if we could laugh less, it would be a good thing, and not to laugh at all would be even better.

These are illustrations of the way in which the ariyan discipline differs from the traditions of ordinary lay people. According to the traditions of ordinary people, singing, dancing, and laughing are of no consequence and are normal events, while in the ariyan discipline they are looked upon as pathetic and evaluated accordingly. Such is the view of one whose mind is highly developed.

The Buddha is not saying, do not do such things when we want to, but only wants us to know that there are higher and lower ways to behave, and that we need not do unnecessary things. When we are not yet ariyans, we may want to try out such lower forms of behavior. If we do give them a try, we will realize that they are sometimes amusing, but in the end we'll get tired of them. Then we can raise ourselves to the level and discipline of the ariyans.

Some people don't like to hear about "discipline". They worry that restraining themselves might lead to dukkha. However, trying to control oneself in order not to follow one's moods is an important principle in Buddhism. To hold down the body and mind so that they don't follow such moods is not dukkha. Rather, this is the way to defeat dukkha. We must find means to avoid falling under the oppression of selfish feelings or defilements. We should set our minds to not allowing the defilements to incite and master us. Take a look at dancing and see how much the defilements goad us and master us and have us in their control. Is this freedom?

It then occurs to us that we ought to improve our status somewhat. Don't be an ordinary lay person forever! Apply for admission into the society of the Buddha, that is, have knowledge, intelligence, awareness, and understanding, so that suffering may be diminished. Avoid making things unnecessarily hard and fruitless for yourself. This is the reward you will reap; you will rise from the level of the ordinary lay person to become a true Buddhist, an ariyan dwelling in the ariyan discipline. The Buddha hoped there would come to be many ariyans, many who would not remain ordinary worldlings forever. (The end)