

Buddhist Discussion Centre (Upwey) Ltd.



Precious Human Birth

The following Dhamma talk was given at the Buddhist Discussion Centre (Upwey) Ltd. on 29th September 2009 by Venerable Bhante Kassapa founder of Rockhill Hermitage, an international Theravada Tradition Vipassana meditation and Dhamma study centre in Sri Lanka.

He is a disciple of the Most Venerable Agar Maha Panditha Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Maha Nayake Thera who was one of the great spiritual figures of the 20th century whose spiritual message touched the lives of people from many religious backgrounds.

Venerable Bhante Kassapa is a Patron of the Buddhist Discussion Centre (Upwey) Ltd.

Precious Human Birth

Dear sweet old friends. Once again I am very pleased to be here with you, to share my Dhamma experience, my Dhamma knowledge, and first of all I would like to thank you for organising this Dhamma talk for me to deliver this evening at the Upwey Buddhist Centre. Especially I would like to thank our Dhamma friend Frank, and Dhamma friend Anita for your effort and your courage; for showing gratitude to your teacher, and for inviting me to deliver this Dhamma discourse this evening. And also thank you very much Rani for bringing me here, offering transport - a very comfortable car. And thank you every presence here today. All welcome to this Dhamma discourse.

Immediately after I arrived at this centre, we naturally started Dhamma talk, Dhamma discussion. We talked about how it is difficult to have a human birth. How it is rare in the world, to gain a human birth. The value of human birth is immeasurable. In words we cannot say how much it gives us value in our life. So first of all we have to consider why we have taken this human birth. Why we are born here? I think sometimes maybe you have considered this.

Why you are born here. Why you have taken this human birth.

I think we have been born in this realm as heavenly beings many times. Why were we born as a deity to live in heavenly realms? Because we have accumulated so many good deeds; performing the practice of generosity, the practice of discipline, the practice of meditation. This all produces a kind of positive energy within our heart. In our traditional way of explaining this positive energy are the words: kusala kamma. Wholesome acts. So we accumulate these wholesome acts, good deeds and good thought and good speech - there are many ways we can accumulate these wholesome merits. According to the result of this merit we have to be born somewhere. Because there are not only human beings being born in this human world. There are so many other realms.

Why is a person dying? Why is a person taken in another rebirth? Death and rebirth. Death and rebirth. Why is a person facing this problem of birth and rebirth all the time? Why we are dying and why we are born. We receive the result of good kamma, or sometimes evil kamma. We have to pay for all of these. That is why the rebirth, the existence going on and on is a non-stopping continuous journey through samsara.

We don't know which forms we are taking; how we are going to be born. We don't know but it still doesn't matter what forms we are taking. We still are receiving the result of good kamma or bad kamma accumulated in our previous lifetime. Otherwise we don't want to die. We can't continue to sustain our lives because this only human world is not enough to give us the result of all the accumulations that we gain in our lifetime. That is why we die. Why we die is to receive the result of all the good deeds and bad deeds that we did in our previous life.

That is why it is taking place all the time. And then the evil unwholesome acts always bring low existence. We don't want to say that, no? Really, really. The result coming from evil acts is preparing the opportunity for us to be born in the low existence. Low, low existence. To be born in the blind world, or deaf world, or other than that. Low existence. There are many realms. Low existence. Different realms. Really, really suffering, not painful like we have here as a human being.

When you compare your life to that kind of existence, low existence, the suffering that you experience here, is like a mustard seed, that is the suffering that you have in the human world. When you compare it to very few, very high, very tall big mountains, even you can't see the mustard seed. Those huge mountains, the suffering is like huge mountains, in that low existence.

Enlightened beings, those who have developed psychic powers, saw this. How people are suffering by being born in this low existence according to the accumulations of all their unwholesome acts. They are receiving the result by being born in a low existence. But people who accumulate wholesome acts are being born in a good realm, like heaven.

Now there's a problem that I see. When you are born in the heaven it is a good place to be there. Better than the human world because everything is delicate there. The lifestyle is very delicate. It is not a solid body like what we have here. Here is now cold, Winter. There is nothing there. Here is suffering a little bit in winter. See how many layers I wear? When Sri Lankan people see me in my country they say Bhante "why'd you change your robes - did you change your robes"? So I keep the robes just so we are covering, covering to protect from this cold. But the heaven, they don't have such.

Everything that you wish, it comes to you. Everything that you wish, it comes to you. All the time that creation is going there in the heavens that is the result of good kamma, but you do not accumulate there. You only receive the result of good kamma. There is no place you can accumulate there. You don't tell monks there to work for dhamma. There is no practice of generosity there. You think OK you can keep your money now. "When I go to heaven I will do lots of practice of generosity". No place, no bank there. You cannot practice generosity there. What you have accumulated as wholesome acts, all the good things you have accumulated is there with you, but you are receiving the result of that.

I will give you an example... I think on the other day I also gave this example. Suppose when you bank your money and you think you have enough money now in the bank. You say, 'I have deposited a lot of money. I don't want to deposit any more. I withdraw now'. So you keep withdrawing. So you keep withdrawing, not depositing in the bank. End results are what? You end up bankrupt. If you are born as a heavenly being then the same thing will happen to your life force.

In the heaven you only withdraw your things. No deposit there. You cannot make fresh kamma. After you finish, you have withdrawn everything, then you become bankrupt. Then you have to be born again, you have to be born somewhere. Sometimes not as a human being, sometimes in the animal world. Straight from heaven to the animal world. Who knows? That is the power of kamma. The consequences of kamma, the workings of the kamma is incredible. Once kamma gives the result to be born as a heavenly being, given all the comfort, all pleasure, all the joy to enjoy our life there and all of a sudden change! And you are put into a lot of trouble. You are given the birth of an animal somewhere. Very dangerous! I can see the danger. Can you see? Because you are not serious! Are you serious about your life? So think seriously about this.

And that's why I say all the time. What is the value of having this human birth? Seeing all around us how people are born into the low existence, how they are suffering and amidst all that suffering we have gained this valuable human birth. But we should not devalue this human birth that we are given.

And people insult the valuable human birth in many ways by being angry. With whom are you getting angry with the human birth? You are getting angry, and angry and angry and it runs into hatred and if you never separate anger from hatred then you are a living victim. You are now living with a very hostile life. Very angry and with a great deal of frustration, agitation, worries and sadness and amidst of all these miserable conditions we invite to this: our human birth.

And the second thing is we insult our human birth in another way - giving much torture to our body. We never show kindness to our body and compassion, then more suffering, we add more suffering to the body. And this body is very innocent. This body doesn't know that we talk, what we do, whether it sleeps, whether it wakes, whether he eats. This body doesn't know anything. Only the mind knows. So we should not punish the body.

The body is very innocent. Day and night it helps us for our survival. There are no strikes inside. All the organs function in a normal way. The nervous system functions in a normal way. The blood circulation functions in a normal way. All systems function in a normal way. The organs in the body function in a normal way. The brain functions in a normal way.

But we don't consider this - how we can damage all normal functions inside the body. The latest discovery in the medical field, with the experts specialising, many psychologists, discovered recently how we damage the functions of our nervous systems; how we damage the functions of the immune system. It is called the psychoneuroimmunology system. Now they discovered how we damage: psycho - mind, neuro - nervous system (material part of the body), and immunology. Immunology is a great, great friend in our body to fight all unwanted disease arising, to ward it off. It fights against disease in our body.

They (body functions) are damaged by our own thoughts. That's why recently in the medical field they have discovered that evil thoughts can damage this normal operation of these systems. They say that anger; they found that anger is a nasty thing which causes damages and the brain secretes hormones or some chemicals in the body to disturb all the normal

functions. They discovered this recently. They encourage people to do lots of metta bhavana (loving-kindness). In the medical field!!!

You see they found why people are getting so sick. Because of this! We say it doesn't matter, this anger. That's OK. But it's not doesn't matter for the body. It is creating some trouble. Now they encourage people to think positively. What is positive thinking? Now they encourage people to practice mindfulness because mindfulness brings a lot of prevention from this anger and delusion that we have in our mind. Because mindfulness gives us an opportunity to see what is really there in the mind. So, it is a very helpful practice. So therefore now in the medical field they say OK [positive thoughts]. Set your mind free from anger. They discovered this!

That's why our Buddha, our lord Buddha discovered this 2500 centuries ago. He discovered how the body is affected by negative thoughts. Now 21st century, very learned, very scholarly people, licensed in the medical field, our preachers and psychologists, learnt the same as what Buddha taught 2500 centuries ago. See how in modern science, the scientists all go along with Buddhism. Now Buddhism is the true teaching in the world. When we go to other countries to teach the scientists come and sit with us now. The scientists come to Rock Hill, to my place in Sri Lanka, for meditation. So they started, they moved, many scientists.

So, now this modern life, I don't want to say much about modern lives. It is a very complicated one. There is no definition for modern life. If I am going to talk about it I have problems. Therefore I don't touch that subject.

So modern life for some people is what? The whole world - all the scientists, how they did they developed this technology? They all have made this vast world as a small world. The whole world they have brought to our palm. The world is very small for us. Now we are living in this world - very crowded. Before, thirty years ago, people had much space to live in the world. It could accommodate any person. Now there is no accommodation in this world. We are all crowded into one small world. Like the sardine and the salmon contained in a tin. We all have a busy life.

Now what's communication? For sure thirty years ago you have to write a letter, then you have to take it to the post office, then you have wait for the post master then you have to wait for the stamp and there is no glue, then you put the stamp on your tongue... and get some saliva ... you do lots of things and so it takes half a day, because you have to stand in line, in

the queue and you are waiting, waiting in the cold. Finally you post a letter. And it takes 3 days, 4 days, 5 days, 10 days to reach the other corner of the world. Takes a long time.

Now we just go and sit in front of the computer. Email! Oh email - electronic mail! And when you type you can see the other person on the other side! You see - talk, talk. How at once in science and technology, now all the barriers, communications barriers are broken down, broken through. So England is now close to us. We can talk to someone who is there now. "Hello, how are you?" Can talk - telephone or email message - if they don't talk to you. "Are you sleeping now"? Send an email. Even if there is a computer nearby his bed he can open it up and see you.

How things from thirty years ago have changed! When we come to this - to live with this advanced technology and science, how is your life going to fit into it? We also become very busy people because of this. Then our mind becomes more and more materialistic because we are going along with this development of science. Then we forget ourselves. Our spiritual side of life we are slowly forgetting. Our heart becomes very dry, there is no loving energy.

Now, the children. You impart all the knowledge to them - they go to high school, go to international school, learn this, learn this, learn this, educate. They also learn the same thing - they also become very material minded. They also drain their heart of compassion, loving energy, no appreciation - that's a drained heart. Because, we are loading the knowledge to their brain. All the time we are loading this, imparting knowledge.

That's parents duties - ooh I want to educate these children! When they are growing up they rebel. When they become 15, 16, 17, 18, 20 they rebel with their parents. Because they don't know how their parents struggle to bring them up. How they were sent to school. Early in the morning their parents woke up, had to prepare their meal for lunch, drive them to school. They forget this. Because, for children this is OK, because, they have no way to think. They don't have kindness in their mind. There's no compassion. All drained.

If you put your children in this situation then the one part of their life - what's happening materially - they are developed; spiritually they are very little developed. No good.

Bring the children to a centre on a Sunday. Make them sit 2-3 hours. Teach Dhamma and make worship the Buddha. And teach them the importance, value of the teaching of the

Buddha - the greatest sentient being who was ever born in the world. Very rare being - the Buddha. Teach them the quality, the word jewels of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sanga. Teach them the quality of what you gain, the result of this by the practice of giving and sharing, practice of generosity and discipline. And to develop the brain, develop the nervous system, develop the mind. Cultivate the mind through meditation.

We have to bring the children. Have to get the feeling of this place. Not only you come and listen to the Dhamma and you enjoy that. The children also have to. Because they are the next generation. They are going along with that. I sometimes feel very, very uneasy about this. When I see children are somewhere and parents are somewhere.

They are not meeting each other. There is no relationship between children and parents anymore. They are going away from their parent's life. They become very stubborn later. Then finally what they think - OK this life is suffering, suffering. Suffering, suffering. I must find a good existence. They are doing something, then commit suicide. No heart. All faults come from the parents at the very beginning. Because, you can bring very small children. I accept if *they* cannot do that. If they don't listen to you. Only, if you go to sleep, and after you go to sleep, if a child opens a door and goes out to the street - they are naughty. Our children do not do this. When you close the door they are all in their places. They are asleep. They are very obedient. You have to teach them when you have this opportunity.

Christian and Catholic tradition - what they are doing? Sunday. The first thing they are taught is discipline, the second thing is education. The first thing is discipline, ethics and a good way of life. They teach this at Catholic schools, Christian schools.

I have a film. Some school children come to us because I have given school children a day of meditation in my place. They have come from high schools - international high schools. They are sons of district judges and lawyers, doctors, engineers. International schools. These children come. When they get down off the bus and proceed to my place I watch standing on a rock - Rock Hill - it is a hill. How they come! Very good manners - discipline. I can see this. Well built. So now we must consider about this also. Because your children - we have to bring them up with these good qualities, the virtues. We are not going to convert them from any religion. Just show them the right path.

Now we come back to our subject again - the value of human birth. Why are you born in this human realm? I am asking you. Did you consider anytime why you are born in this human

birth? Why you are here? Why you came this evening to listen to me? What purpose? You don't answer me - I answer. You have taken this human birth - it is not like falling from the tree all of a sudden.

You are all seated here with me due to your previous accumulations of good kamma. Don't think that I will say it is a great kamma to be here, this is not what I am saying - it is a good kamma to be here. Your accumulation of good kamma in your previous life - you show me by sitting here. It is a result of your previous kamma. If you didn't accumulate any kind of good kamma before you won't be here. What brought you here are your conditions - which you put into your mind by accumulating good deeds. The result of those good conditions brought you here.

“So you are teaching me good dhamma by sitting there with your silent mind. Bhante look at us. Why we are here? Because, we are the result of our past. We gained a lot of accumulations before. That is why we are here Bhante. You are teaching every moment this evening!”

Now! There is a purpose of being reborn. You are not simply reborn as a human being. Why you were in the heaven you thought to yourself. Oh, we are consuming all the results of previous kamma. This is not the right place to be. If we finish all our results where are we going to be born? This is a very dangerous place. Which world can we be reborn in and which world accumulates good kamma? Then you see only the human world can accumulate good kamma. There is no other world. That is why you are born here, for the further development of your life, further cultivation of your mind. That is why you are born here. Don't loosely consider this.

There is a purpose of taking birth as a human being here. There is a purpose. That is why we are surrounded by lots of Buddhist centres now. Thus we are privileged, we have opportunity, great, great opportunity and fortune to associate with good teachers. And to meet with the teaching of the Buddha, to come across the Buddha *sasene*. To encounter this Buddha *sasene* you have to have the result of good, good kamma accumulated. You have all this fortune. Now you should not waste your time. Now have your insight.

Now, we come to the first thing I talked about at the very beginning of my talk -the anger that we experience in our life. You are insulting yourself. Instead of experiencing anger try to develop some positive thought like loving energy, metta-bhavana. In the morning very easily you can do this. After you wake up in the bed you say “May I be well and happy, may I be

well and happy". Feed positive thoughts into your system. Before you take your water even, it's good. You are supporting your physical body with water in the morning.

What do you? You wake up early in the morning. You have a very nice pure glass of water. I don't know if you agree with that. It is the best thing to do in the morning. If you are not allergic to this water! Then please take it in the morning without putting anything into the system. One pure glass of water. Then put something into the mind. "May I be well and happy". Don't give without giving anything into the mind. Give to the mind also. "May I be well and happy. May I be well and happy. May I be well and happy". Then after a while you say don't use "May I be well and happy" now already you are happy. Now because you put the seeds in you say "I am well and happy. I am well and happy. I am well and happy".

Who else do I want to be happy? Who is close to you? Your husband, your boyfriend, your children, somebody - think of them. May they also be well and happy. Radiate the radiance of that life to other people also - other beings also. "May all beings be free of suffering. May they all be well and happy. May they all be well and happy". See, in the morning, without spending one single dollar you have created so much treasure - precious treasure. You are accumulating. Even without getting down off your bed. I don't know if you want to do that. But it is good yes? We must be serious. You must be serious about your life. You must be serious about your human birth. Don't loosely accept this human birth. This is so valuable what I am saying.

You can insult your body also - go to the pub in the morning and have some drinks. It is not good. It is not a human thought. It is an in-human thought. So in this human body in-humans are living. That's the problem. Who can change this? That's the problem!

Now! Just a few minutes on metta-bhavana. If you have a little time before you go to work or get out of your bed, then at some moment - those beings who are suffering be free from suffering, then you are delivering your compassion. "Those who are in fear be free from fear. Those who suffer from sorrow be free from sorrow. May all beings be well and happy", saying that, get out of your bed.

Now some people get out of bed - I have never seen this but I just feel people are doing that. We don't want to test everything to come to reality, to know the reality. By feeling we know this. Some people when they wake they don't see the other one's face. Very long big face. And slowly one is looking at the east and the other west. Lots of grudges - anger, hate,

hatred, because they can't meet face to face. This is no good. We have to come out of bed smiling.

So why are we placing this Buddha here very nicely? It is not a decoration for us. This face is showing us how to smile. When you meet a person you have this smile on your face? No! We are very tense when we look at someone. We don't want to have to smile. The Buddha is very calm, very serene. He knows how to keep our face, you know, The Buddha. It's a good lesson.

The other one is that we insult our body by accumulating cold. We are very cold to ourselves. No kindness. We hate this body. We don't like this body. We are complaining about the body. We are complaining all the time about this body. Then if you are 'not right' you go to a beauty shop and do something - get some make-up. Unfortunately, if you go into the rain, then all the make-up is gone! All the trouble! All your money is gone! Make-up is gone! Tell me - learn to make up your mind! Then you can have beautiful body, beautiful face. Right, if you go to a beauty shop and you make up your face and everything is nice now, then come. If you have an angry mind, what is the result of that make-up? The face is long. The make-up never makes it nice.

Compassion. When you see people suffering around you - how can you help these suffering people? The load of their suffering in the world and mainly society's - poverty! How you can help these people, even in the smallest way? You cannot take away all the suffering in the world but in the smallest way you can help. You can comfort them. You can give one dollar - another person gives one dollar, and another, one dollar. (We can make a huge positive experience). We can change their lives for one dollar you can create change. You see that's compassion.

The other thing is we insult our bodies. A very, very nasty thing is jealousy. This society is full of jealousy everywhere. If a gentleman comes along with a nice shirt tomorrow, he wears the nice jacket too! This gentleman has a nice jacket - where did he get it? If we can't get it - the long faces. Where did you get that shirt? Where did you get that dress? No? Jealousy. If you drive a very good car - how did you get that good car? If you build a very good house - how did you get that house? How can they have so much money? Where did they get money to build that house? If we can't stand other people's happiness, peace, and their wealth and their health... can't stand it they don't want to see... that's people's jealousy.

Second birth! If you are born as a human birth, or any other birth, their skin becomes really lumpy, coarse skin...no one can look twice at this skin. That is the result of jealousy. It is a nasty, nasty, evil thing. The result is very, very nasty. If you go to make-up that face in the beauty shop - the beauty shop is closed. There is nothing to put on that face in the beauty shop... can't make it into anything else. I don't know if you have seen that. Twice, you can't look at that face or body. Have you seen? One day you will have to go to India - the Ganges River. On one side you can see this kind of people. I am sure. Ooh, I have seen. That's jealousy. The result of jealousy! No good!

So now we have antidotes for these things. If you have anger, you'll have metta. If they are unkind to you or cruel, you will have compassion, lots of compassion. If you have jealousy - the antidote for jealousy is appreciation. Appreciate other people's happiness, please. That can help.

The other one is very difficult for us... even it happened to Buddha, during the enlightenment. Everyone. All of us. Sometimes people praise us. "Ooh you are a good gentleman... ooh you are providing a good service. I am happy". Sometimes the same person will do this - abuse, abuse. "You are a bad person, I have never seen such a person as you". We have to face this problem. We can't always have praise, expect praise from people. People can also abuse us. Then what can we do? We are not going with a club to hit him. But when we hear praise - "tell me more, more! Tell me more about me. I am so happy to hear... very excited!" No good! Make your mind balanced.

If someone praises you. OK, OK that's the result of good kamma. If abuse... OK, this is only words which come back to me...only words, nothing to do about these words. Don't accept them. Don't put them into your system. Let it outside... at least the words are very useful to learn from. They are the result of bad kamma. If you abuse somebody in your place - you have seen the result! Can't tell you that. You're finished with that, really. You have finished with that kamma. And sometimes we gain. Sometimes we lose. Make your mind balanced. OK.

Sometimes we associate with good friends. Sometimes we fall in and associate with very bad people. Maintain your balance. Make your mind balanced. That's called equanimity. If you can, decorate your mind with these four virtues - metta bhavana - loving kindness, *karuna* - compassion, *mudita* - appreciation and equanimity. This is you. You add more value to your human birth. You are adding more value to your human birth. Then you can realise your hand in human birth, you are considering why we are born to develop these kind of virtues in us.

So now we have a great fortune to encounter this Buddha sasene and to listen to his doctrine. It is very difficult to listen. Everyone cannot listen to the teaching of Buddha. How many people live in the world? How many people listen to Buddha? Very rare, very few people. So, now in the world the growing interest in Buddhism is everywhere! Buddhism is a very fast, rapid growing religion in the world.

Buddha he gave us this message - the message of peace and welfare of society, welfare of our lives. So now we have to share that message. We have to respect that message. And we have to apply that message to our daily lives. Doesn't matter what umbrella we are living under. If you take the Buddha's teachings as your umbrella, under this umbrella there are so many traditions of Buddhism schools, sects. But they have only one thought - they are respecting the message of Buddha - the message of the peace of the Buddha. Living under this umbrella are different traditions, different sects, but only the umbrella is called Buddhism; Buddhist religion. Under this umbrella we are all together. What are we doing? We are cultivating these virtues. It doesn't matter that we belong to other traditions, or schools.

So this place was created...this centre was created by our great Dhamma friend, John Hughes. And I came to know him in the 90s and since I came to know him he became a profound friend of mine. I also became a good friend. And we stayed together maintaining our friendship and this spiritual friendship. We had a very profound, spiritual friendship. So it is a great loss for all of us to lose John as a great teacher, separated from us, departed from us. But he sowed within us all the seeds of enlightenment. He made the field very nice. And he plowed the field. And he put the seeds in the ground and the crops come.

And all we have to do is reap these crops and enjoy the Dhamma. And so to continue this marvelous, tremendous, effortless Dhamma service; to continue that generation; Frank, our Dhamma friend, and Anita, have taken this on, all the responsibility of teaching which John did. And both of them are surrounded by good Dhamma friends supporting them. I am very happy to see this. Once again when I am in Melbourne I will give another Dhamma talk. If you invite me I will come. And I would like to see this progress all the time and in the future. And I wish you all a very successful life. I wish you all to be well and happy. Wish you all good health, long life and prosperity.

We conclude this Dhamma discussion sharing this merit with John Hughes' spirit and all other departed friends. Now you have listened to a Dhamma discourse given by the Buddha. The message that Buddha brought to us 2500 centuries ago is still fresh, is

new. The Dhamma that he has taught is akaliko for all times. And it has never become old teaching. It is very relevant to the lives we are living now. We have listened to this Dhamma.

Please follow all the advice I have given in my Dhamma discourse and thus all accumulations of good merits which we have gained by listening to this Dhamma talk. And we want to share this merit with all our departed friends and all our relatives and mainly our founder John Hughes, our great Dhamma friend and all other religious superbeings. And through this merit, wherever they are born may they find happiness and peace in their lives. And after all may they all gain their enlightenment.

Now we are happy to see our great Dhamma friend - John Hughes' daughter is here. "Rani, I am very happy to see you here". Your dad, what he has brought to the Buddha Sasene! To bring happiness and peace to people's life and all the deities - those who are looking after this Dhamma centre, and Frank and Anita and all their children and all our Dhamma friends. You are all protected by the deities, those who are dwelling in this area. Over streams and mountains or rivers, wherever they are.

These deities are personally waiting, after you have listened to this Dhamma talk. They are also expecting some merit from us. It is a good opportunity for us to share this merit with them. And all the deities share this merit this evening thus we accumulate it. And may you protect us all the time: our centre and our homes, our children, our properties, our grand children and us all the time. Wherever we go, whatever we do.

And also through accumulations of all these merits we have accumulated today, may you all be able to experience good health, long life and prosperity. Finally may you all gain your enlightenment; setting free from all the acts of rebirth, educating all the defilements of your mind. And may you all attain enlightenment.

"The gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts".