

**Dhamma Talk** The Most Venerable  
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## 4. The Four Right Exertions

*Namo tassa Bhagavato, Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa.*

Homage to that Blessed one, who is an Arahant and perfectly  
Self-enlightened.

*Cattāro'me, bhikkhavē, sammappadhānā. Katame cattāro?  
Idha, bhikkhavē, bhikkhu anuppannānam pāpakānam  
akusalānam dhammānam anuppādāya chandam jāneti  
vāyamati viriyam ārabhati cittam pagganhāti padahati;  
uppannānam pāpakānam akusalānam dhammānam  
pahānāya chandam janeti vāyamati viriyam ārabhati  
cittam pagganhāti padahati; anuppannānam kusalānam  
dhammānam uppādāya chandam janeti vāyamati viriyam  
ārabhati cittam pagganhāti padahati; uppannānam  
kusalānam dhammānam thitiyā asammōsāya bhīyyo-  
bhāvāya vepullāya bhāvanāya pāripāriyā chandam janeti  
vāyamati viriyam ārabhati cittam pagganhāti padahati  
imē kho, bhikkhave, cattāro sammappadhānā'ti.*

(S.49:1; A.4:13)

Monks, there are these four right exertions, what are the four? Here, monks, a monk arouses desire, exerts himself, arouses energy and puts forth will for the non-arising of unarisen evil and unwholesome mental qualities □ for the abandoning of arisen evil and

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unwholesome mental qualities □ for the arising of  
un arisen wholesome mental qualities □ for the enduring,  
unwavering, growth, increase, development and fulfilment  
of arisen wholesome mental qualities.

Faithful Devotees, let us examine the meaning of term '*sammappadhāna-viriya*', *samma*, the shortened final vowel form of *sammā* which is found in some compound words, means belonging to the moral or wholesome side, it also stands for correct, directing to *nibbāna*, eliminating the unwholesome and developing the wholesome; *padhāna-viriya* means the effort taken to achieve *jhāna*, the four paths & fruits and *nibbāna*, without giving consideration for the physical body or, even, life itself.<sup>1</sup> The four exertions that we are going to discuss are proper or right and help bring us to *nibbāna*. *Viriya* is a word we hear very often.<sup>2</sup> It is the nature (*bhāva*) of a heroic person (*vīra*) to have energy (*viriya*) [and exert himself]. The characteristic (*lakkhana*) of this energy is application of body and mind towards the performing of wholesome actions. The function (*rasa*) of energy is to [initiate and] support wholesome consciousnesses. Energy manifests (*paccupatthāna*) as going forward until the ultimate

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<sup>1</sup> C.f. S.12:22 Ý Thus, monks, in regards to this Dhamma, which is clear, open, explained, free from patchwork and well expounded by me, it is enough for a son of good family, who has gone-forth out of faith, to arouse energy (thinking): 'willingly let this body's flesh and blood dry up, and let [just] the bones, sinews and skin remain Þ there will be no stagnation of energy while that which is to be attained by manly strength, energy and endeavour is not yet attained.' C.f. also M.70, A.2:5 & A.8:13. At D.33, M.85 & A.5:53 there are five factors belonging to exertion (*pa<sup>va</sup>ca padhāniya<sup>g</sup>àni*): faith in the enlightenment of the Buddha, **XX**, is not fraudulent nor deceiving, but reveals himself as he is to the teacher (i.e. the Buddha) or fellow observers of the *brahmacariya* who are wise, has aroused energy for the abandoning of unwholesome dhammas and is firm, strongly endeavour and not shirking their duty in going towards distinction with wholesome dhammas and endowed with wisdom that **XX**

<sup>2</sup> This is because it is necessary to achieve anything Þ both good and bad, but here referring to the good, and in particular the spiritual quest; in the *bodhi-pākkhiya dhammas* it is the most often mentioned aspect, appearing nine times under various names, such as *viriya*, *padhāna* and *vāyāma*.

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goal is achieved. The near cause (*padatthāna*<sup>3</sup>) is the eight means<sup>4</sup> by which this energy is developed. According to the Buddha's discourses effort occurs nine times in the [thirty seven] dhammas that lead to enlightenment (*bodhi-pākkhiya dhammas*), they are as follows:

- *Cattāro sammappadhānā*- the four right exertions<sup>5</sup>
- *Viriya-samādhippadhāna-sankhāra-samannāgata Iddhi-pāda* - the concentration achieved by energy and exertion endowed way to [attaining] psychic power
- *Viriyindriya* - the [spiritual] dominion of energy
- *Viriya-bala* - the spiritual capability of energy
- *Viriya-sambojjhanga* - the energy factor of enlightenment
- *Sammā-vāyāma* - right effort, which is one of the factors of the noble eightfold path<sup>6</sup>

*Viriya* is a powerful constituent of the *bodhi-pākkhiya dhammas*, e.g. among the bodhisattas<sup>7</sup> there are some who are very energetic, i.e. excel in energy (*viriyādhika*). Therefore, this is an essential requisite for the attainment of Arahantship, Paccekabuddha-hood or

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<sup>3</sup> This is the four-fold way of analysis of *virīya*, i.e. defining according to its characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate or nearest cause for it's arising, see Vism.XIV,137.

<sup>4</sup> Here referring to the `añña saūvega-vatthāni' and `añña ārambha-vatthāni,' see below p. \_\_.

<sup>5</sup> See above p. \_\_.

<sup>6</sup> D.22 (= A.4:13, i.e. the explanation for *sammā-vāyāma* is identical with that given for the *cattāro sammappadhānā*).

<sup>7</sup> At Sn.35 Comm. it is related that there are three types of Bodhisattas, those who are strong or superior in wisdom (*paññādhika*), those strong or superior in faith (*saddhādhika*) and then those strong or superior in energy (*viriyādhika*); the time that it takes for them to attain the goal of Buddhahood after receiving confirmation (from an earlier Buddha) also varies, it takes four, eight and sixteen incalculable (*asaikheyya* = 10<sup>140</sup>) aeons (*kappas*) respectively (these numbers are always quoted with 100,000 aeons added to the above figures).

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Sammāsambuddhahood. We mentioned earlier that there are four aspects of effort;<sup>8</sup> they are as follows:

- There may be greed, ill will and delusion rooted immoralities that may not have arisen in this life,<sup>9</sup> such as: the five evil or bad actions (*panca pāpa-kammāni*<sup>10</sup>), ten unwholesome actions (*dasa akusala-kamma-pathā*<sup>11</sup>), five heinous deeds (*panca ānantariya-kammāni*<sup>12</sup>) and wrong view (*micchā-ditthi*). If not already arisen in this life one must with strong desire (*chanda*<sup>13</sup>) make every effort with

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<sup>8</sup> C.f. D.33 = A.4:13-14. A.4:14 Ý □ Monks, there are these four exertions, □ a monk is restrained in regards to the [sense] predominances and the mind, i.e. not taking up the [main] features or minor details of forms seen/sounds heard/odours smelt/tastes savoured/bodily sensations experienced/mental states cognised, which would Þ in the event of being unrestrained Þ give rise to covetousness or grief, evil and unwholesome mental qualities. This, monks, is called the exertion of restraining (*saūvarappadhāna*). □ abandons, gives up and brings to an end sensual/malice/cruel thoughts. This, monks, is called the exertion of abandoning (*pahānappadhāna*). □ develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness/investigation of dhammas/effort/rapture/tranquillity/concentration/equanimity. This, monks, is called the exertion of development (*bhāvanāppadhāna*). □ protects the excellent concentration sign (*samādhi-nimitta*) that has arisen, like the perception of a skeleton, bloated corpse, etc. This, monks, is called the exertion of protecting (*anurakkhaḍḍāppadhāna*).

<sup>9</sup> D.22 Comm.

<sup>10</sup> I.e. killing living beings (*pāḍātipāta*), taking what has not been given (*adinnādāna*), engaging in sexual misconduct (*kāmesu micchācāra*), [deliberately uttering] false speech (*musā-vāda*) and taking fermented, distilled [alcoholic] drinks or non-medicinal drugs that are cause for heedlessness (*surā-meraya-majja-pamādaññhāna*). C.f. A.5:178 where each one of these actions is called a *pāpa-kamma*.

<sup>11</sup> See p.12 (f.n.6) for these.

<sup>12</sup> Literally the five without-an-interval actions Þ meaning that the very next rebirth must be in the deepest hell (*avāci-niraya* Ý lit. uninterrupted [suffering] hell) for any violations of these (see p.12 (f.n.7) for these). For descriptions of the extent of suffering involved in *niraya* see M.130, A.3:36 & Sn.657-678 (in this case for speaking ill of pure ones).

<sup>13</sup> *Chanda* is used here in a wholesome sense.

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body and mind to avoid such actions, developing and maintaining such effort even at the expense of the physical body and life. The effort established in one's mind to achieve the avoidance of unwholesome actions is in a worldly sense one of the four mundane right efforts. When such effort arises in the paths & fruits consciousnesses it is supramundane effort.

- During this life if there arises greed, ill will, delusion, conceit, jealousy, sceptical doubt, sloth & torpor, restlessness & worry (conscience) & fear of blame one must immediately with strong desire apply body and mind and make every effort to remove such mental defilements. Further this effort must be supported, developed, strengthened and maintained even without consideration for ones own life. This is the second right effort. In a worldly sense, effort made to eradicate unwholesome mental volitions that have arisen is the mundane right effort. When such effort arises in the paths & fruits consciousnesses it is supramundane effort.
- There may be wholesome deeds that have not yet been put into effect. That which arises today and was not arisen yesterday, i.e. newly arisen, and similarly for wholesome states to arise in the future, too. Perhaps [the practice to attain such states as] concentration (*samādhī*), jhānas, attainment concentrations (*samāpattis*<sup>14</sup>), supernormal knowledges (*abhinnās*<sup>15</sup>) and insight knowledges

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<sup>14</sup> See chapt. 3, p. \_\_ (f.n. \_\_).

<sup>15</sup> D.34, M.6, M.73, M.119, etc. Ý there are six supernormal knowledges (*chaëabhiññā*) often mentioned, they are: [various] kinds of psychic power (*iddhi-vidhā*), clairaudience (*dibba-sota* Ý lit. divine ear), ability to know the minds of others (*ceto-pariya-ññā* Ý lit. mind encompassing knowledge [of others]), recollection of past lives knowledge (*pubbe-nivāsānussati-ññā*), knowledge of the passing away and arising [in a new existence] of beings [according to kamma] (*cutāpapāta-ññā*) and knowledge of the elimination of the [mental] effluents (*āsavakkhaya-ññā*). In *Cutāpapāta-ññā* there are

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(*vipassanā-nānas*<sup>16</sup>) have not yet been started, the effort made with desire to develop and achieve the above at the commencement, maintenance, development and strengthening of the above, even without consideration for life, is mundane right effort. When such effort arises in the paths & fruits consciousnesses it is supramundane effort.

- If in this life one has accumulated wholesome actions (*kusala-kammās*), such as: giving alms, undertaking precepts, meditating to achieve access & attainment concentration (*upacāra & appanā samādhi*<sup>17</sup>) and insight knowledges, the effort made with desire and determination to prevent deterioration, to maintaining, developing and further improving of such achievements, even without consideration for one's life, is the fourth right effort. In the sensual sphere, fine material and formless realms they are mundane efforts, and when such effort arises in the paths & fruits consciousnesses it is supramundane effort.

According to the Buddha this is how the four right efforts arise in the mundane and supramundane sense.<sup>18</sup> Wise people consider thus:

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actually two knowledges implied because it is achieved by clairvoyance (*dibba-cakkhu* Ý lit. divine eye). There are two more knowledges that are sometimes mentioned with the above six, though not called *abhiññās*, but are attained in the same way, i.e. by directing the mind that is concentrated, pure, stainless, pliable and achieved stillness; these are: knowledge & vision (*āññā-dassana*) of the physical body, which is made up of the four great elements (i.e. earth, water, fire and air) and the consciousness or mind that is attached or connected to it and the ability to create another body, which is mind made (*mano-maya*) and complete in all aspects together with superior faculties or predominances, from the physical one (D.2, D.10 & M.77).

<sup>16</sup> See chapt. 3, p. \_\_ (f.n. \_\_).

<sup>17</sup> See the Introduction and chapter 3 for more concerning these two terms.

<sup>18</sup> C.f. M.117, where right view, right thought, etc. are said to be two-fold, i.e. that which is with the [mental] effluents, meritorious and ripening with attachment to [a good] existence; and that which is noble, without the [mental] effluents, supramundane and a factor of the path. In this discourse

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‘If unwholesome states arise in my mind they will result in harmful consequences for me, I may be reborn in the lower worlds (*apāyas*<sup>19</sup>) and the number of rebirths [before attaining the paths, fruits and nibbāna] will increase. Therefore, I will be determined to make every effort to prevent the development of any unwholesome thoughts that may arise within me; if unwholesome consciousnesses arise and develop it will result in endless suffering.<sup>20</sup>

Then, as one whose head or clothes are on fire would not delay in extinguishing that fire,<sup>21</sup> or one bitten by a poisonous snake would not delay in taking medicine, the wise make every effort to suppress any unwholesome states that have arisen.

If wholesome states, which have not yet arisen in the mind, are not made to arise it will not result in any beneficial consequences, and so every effort should be made to cause them to arise.

If wholesome states that have arisen deteriorate the previous effort was in vain, and so every effort must be made to redevelop those wholesome states. This is how the four right efforts help to maintain mundane wholesome consciousnesses.

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right exertion, though not specifically mentioned in this context, is also implied to have these two aspects.

<sup>19</sup> These are hell (*niraya*), animal [realm] (*tiracchāna-yoni* Ý lit. horizontal going womb) and realm of [unhappy] departed spirits (*petti-visaya*); at A.8:40 it explains that frequently and habitually killing living beings, taking what is not given, sexually misconducting oneself, deliberately lying, speaking to cause division, speaking harshly, speaking nonsense and drinking alcohol [& taking non-medicinal drugs] leads to these states of existence, but if reborn as a human being then one would have a short life, suffer loss of one's possessions, encounter hostility and hatred, be falsely accused, have broken friendships, hear unpleasant sounds, has unacceptable speech or be not of sound mind as the lightest result for each of the above actions done frequently.

<sup>20</sup> C.f. M.20 Ý □ when evil unwholesome thoughts, which are connected with desire, hatred or delusion, arise, the disadvantages, monks, of these thoughts are to be considered by that monk [thus]: ‘these thoughts are unwholesome, blameworthy and result in *dukkha*.’

<sup>21</sup> This simile is given at A.10:51.

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Regarding the unwholesome consciousness that has not yet arisen the Buddha has dealt with in great detail.<sup>22</sup>

In the course of wandering through the round of births and deaths (*samsāra*) since beginningless time there isn't any kind of unwholesome consciousness that has not arisen in any one's mind. During our existence in *samsāra* everyone has committed all kinds of unwholesome actions and there may be certain unwholesome actions performed in this life, they are of four types:

- *Vattamānuppanna* - (lit. present moment arisen) this refers to unwholesome consciousnesses arising in the present moment. The wise make immediate effort to relinquish and clear such states
- *Bhutvā-vigatuppanna*<sup>23</sup> - (lit. eaten and gone arisen) because of having done unwholesome actions in the past those unwholesome actions are repeated, and also when the results (*vipāka*) of the previous unwholesome actions arises further unwholesome actions are repeated
- *Okāsa-katuppanna* - (lit. Ý opportunity made arisen) sometimes a wholesome kamma result that is established may be suppressed by an unwholesome kamma result in a counter-active or destructive manner
- *Bhūmi-laddhuppanna* - (lit. Ý ground obtained arisen) for unenlightened beings in mundane existence innumerable wholesome and unwholesome kamma results can take effect [when the conditions are right because the defilements have not been abolished]

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<sup>22</sup> For the unarisen unwholesome mind states restraint of the [sense] predominance is taught; see p.40 (f.n.6) for this. See also M.2 for more concerning this, in particular the practices to eliminate all the [mental] effluents are pointed out.

<sup>23</sup> At Vism.XXII,81 this is called '*bhâtâpagatuppanna*' (= *bhâta* (bieng) + *apagata* (departed) + *uppanna* (arisen)), and both of these terms bear some resemblance with *ārammaḍādhiggahituppanna*, which is mentioned below.



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Further, there are [four] other types of unwholesome consciousness, these are:

- *Samudācārappanna* - (lit. behaviour or habit arisen) those are the unwholesome states that arise very often in one's mind. They must be immediately recognized and suppressed. This is [basically] the same as *vattamānuppanna*
- *ārammanādhiḡgahituppanna* - (lit. the object [being] occupied [with] arisen) when [from the senses or mind] an object's sign has been grasped, any time of recollecting that, the defilements can arise
- *Avikkhambhituppanna* - (lit. unsuppressed arisen) those who have not attained the *jhānas* [or mundane insight knowledges] will have defilements that surface repeatedly as they have not been suppressed
- *Asamāhatuppanna* - (lit. unremoved arisen) As knowledge of the [supra-mundane] path has not been realized latent defilements (*anussayas*), though not always arising, can arise at any time

(M.77 Comm., Sn.1:1 Comm. & Vism.XXII,81Ý91)

These are the various types of unwholesome consciousness. It is necessary to understand these and keep the mind cleansed as a gem that is polished frequently. We must consider that, from the time we took refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, all the wholesome actions we perform develop the four right efforts. It is valuable to understand that whenever we engage in performing the ten bases for making merit (*dasa punna-kiriyā-vatthāni*<sup>24</sup>), for example: observing precepts, giving alms, listening to Dhamma and caring for elders; the ten courses of wholesome action (*dasa kusala-kamma-patha*); ten perfections (*dasa pāramiyo*); dhammas that should be done (*karaṇīya dhammas*); great auspicious dhammas (*mahā-mangala dhammas*) and the *bodhi-pākkhiya dhammas*, all the actions of body, speech and mind involved therein develop the four right efforts in our minds.

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<sup>24</sup> For these, i.e. the *dasa puṇṇa-kiriyā-vatthāni* □ *mahā-maḡgala dhammas*, see above,p. \_\_.

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How does this happen? All wholesome consciousnesses contain the six occasional (*pakinnaka*) mental qualities, one of which is effort. There are no wholesome consciousnesses without effort. This effort arises according to the bodhi (Arahant, Paccēkabuddha or Sammāsambuddha) aspired<sup>25</sup> to by an individual. Then the effort that arises in the wholesome consciousnesses becomes a *bodhi-pākkhiya dhamma*, which helps one to attain one of these three types of *bodhi*. Although it arises in different forms such as [the four right exertions,] the way by energy to [attain] psychic power, predominance of energy, [spiritual] strength of energy, energy as a factor of enlightenment and right effort, in effect, it joins the *bodhi-pākkhiya dhammas'* group.

When we took refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha there arose in our minds a series of glad minded consciousnesses associated with wisdom. In each one of the mental impulses (*javanas*<sup>26</sup>) so arisen there are thirty-four dhammas, consisting of the thirteen ethically variable, nineteen [universal] beautiful mental qualities, the predominance of wisdom and the mind, effort is one of these thirty-four. When this effort arises in one's mind unarisen unwholesome states will not arise and arisen unwholesome states will be given up [temporarily] by way of substitution of opposites. The effort in that wholesome consciousness will be the nearest dependent cause (*upanissaya*) for unwholesome mind states to be given up [temporarily] by suppression (*vikkhambhanappahāna*) and and [finally] for the giving up by cutting off [of the root for their arising] (*samucchedappahāna*) by the attaining of the four paths & fruits. At the moment a wholesome mind state has arisen the wholesome mental impulses (*javanas*) [that arise therein] are not the [unwholesome] mental impulses that arose earlier, they are new wholesome mental impulses. Therefore, an unarisen wholesome consciousness has arisen and then from [those] mental impulses to the next mental impulses that follow after this, *virīya* [further] develops. So because of one wholesome action the developing of effort is also there. When a wholesome action is performed it is not one mental impulse that

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<sup>25</sup> C.f. Sn.35 Comm. & Ap.1:90 Comm.

<sup>26</sup> For an explanation of this psychological technical term see the Introduction, p.\_\_\_\_.

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results, but billions and billions in series after series. Therefore, the effort that further develops the wholesome action is also there.

You may have heard of a person who having offered a single flower to a cremation relics monument/pagoda/cairn (*cetiya*<sup>27</sup>) [of a Buddha], enjoyed 800 million lifetimes in the world of the devas and was thereafter born as a human, became a monk and attained Arahantship.<sup>28</sup> How did this happen? On his way to venerate a *cetiya*, with each step, he contemplated the qualities of the Buddha (*Buddhaguna*<sup>29</sup>). He then saw a flower in a pond. As he saw it he uttered: *Namo tassa Bhagavato, Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa*, and again contemplating the qualities of the Buddha, washed his hands and plucked the flower. Thereafter he carried that flower with both his hands (i.e. respectfully) and continued his journey towards the *cetiya*, all the while uttering the qualities of the Buddha. On reaching the *cetiya* he washed the pedestal and offered the flower to the Buddha. After looking over the *cetiya* he then, while circumambulating it, knelt down and paid respects at eight different positions (i.e. the four cardinal points and the midpoints); while withdrawing from there he continued to utter the qualities of the Buddha. What happened there? His actions before, during and after offering the flower to the *cetiya* were glad minded (*somanassa-sahagata*), associated with wisdom (*nāna-sampayutta* - lit. associated with knowledge) and unprompted (*asankhārika*) which resulted in the arising of a series of wholesome

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<sup>27</sup> A *cetiya*, sometimes called a *thāpa*, is a filled dome shaped object with a spire on top where the ashes/relics/remains from the cremation of a Sammāsambuddha, Paccekasambuddha, (noble) disciple of a Sammāsambuddha or righteous monarch (*cakka-vattā*) are placed so that people can venerate them; these four are called worthy of a cremation relics monument (*thāpāraha*) because they are cause for many people to become faith inspired (*pasādeti*) and due to the gladness from the inspiration when they pass away (with that state of mind) they are reborn in the celestial realms (D.16 & A.4:247).

<sup>28</sup> In the Canonical book 'Apadāna' (of the Khuddaka-nikāya) there are many stories with this theme related, e.g. Ap.8:1, 16:9 & 34:3; it should, however, be noted that he had already accumulated enough *pāramā* to become an Arahant *P* one does not simply become an Arahant so easily.

<sup>29</sup> These are the nine qualities mentioned in the 'Iti'pi so' stanza, see the Introduction, p. \_\_, for a brief explanation of these.

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consciousnesses. The result of these actions was as mentioned earlier. You may now understand how many cognitive processes (*citta-vīthis*) would have been produced due to this one wholesome act.

When we look at the past lives of the Buddha-to-be (Bodhisatta) it is clear how much effort he has made to complete the perfections required to attain full enlightenment, it was not with an ordinary effort that he donated eyes, heads, flesh and blood, but with an extraordinary effort associated with wisdom.

During a previous life of the Buddha, the Bodhisatta while travelling with a large number of people in a desert, the water for themselves and their cattle ran out. The Bodhisatta saw one single plant of panic grass there and started digging. At a depth of sixty cubits (~ 90 ft. = 27.42 m.) he encountered a large rock. All the people around him became disappointed and discouraged. However, he would not turn back on any task that he undertook without seeing an end to it. He has an energy called '*parakkama-dhātu-viriya*,' i.e. the energy that enables one to overcome all obstacles and continue until the completion of a task. There are three stages of effort:

- *ārambha-dhātu-viriya* - the energy required to commence a task
- *Nikkama-dhātu-viriya* - the energy required to sustain action while performing a task
- *Parakkama-dhātu-viriya* - the energy that enables one to continue until the completion of a task

(S.46:2; 46:51; Vism. IV,52)

At this point he called one of his minor assistants<sup>30</sup> and told him, let us break this rock, otherwise all these people will die here in the desert. They then took turns to attempt to break the rock with a sledge

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<sup>30</sup> J.2 Comm. Ý the Buddha related this story to help a monk, who had given up putting forth effort in the practice of the Dhamma and who happened to be the minor assistant mentioned above; after hearing this story together with some Dhamma teachings the Buddha then taught him the four noble truths and he became an Arahant.

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hammer for a number of hours, even until blisters appeared on their hands, but they succeeded in breaking the rock. Finally, when the rock was broken a large gush of water sprang up from an underground stream and dampened the entire surrounding area. This was not a miracle, but rather the powerful result of his effort. The perseverance that will dig even in the desert and obtain water. Likewise, said the Buddha, monks who make effort will overcome all the defilements in their minds and attain nibbāna.

Among those who made such efforts our Sammāsambuddha is the foremost, most senior and the greatest. The Bodhisatta sitting under the bodhi tree overcame Māra the tempter, and attained full enlightenment. After enlightenment he never relaxed in his application of effort, for forty-five years he continued to cause a deluge of Dhamma, which resulted in innumerable number of beings eliminating all the [mental] effluents (*āsavas*), cross the desert of *samsāra* and reach the supreme bliss of nibbāna. At the end of this short period the Buddha reached final nibbāna (*parinibbāna*), and thus the light that brightened the ten thousand-world system was extinguished, but there was left behind 84,000 items of Dhamma for the benefit of all beings. Likewise, the Arahants who lived during that time reached *parinibbāna*, other noble Sangha members were born in higher worlds, all the other people passed away and were reborn according to their kamma. The temples that existed then, the republics, kingdoms, parks, lakes and palaces went into ruin. Similarly all conditioned things (*sankhāras*), whether having consciousness (i.e. living beings) or not, such as stars, rocks, houses, land, vehicles, garments, money, food, drink and all other consumables are impermanent. They came into being and disappeared. As such it is dukkha and as they cannot be maintained according to our wishes they are non-self.

All conditioned things are subject to the three characteristics [of existence] (*ti-lakkhana*). This is the truth about suffering. The craving that causes suffering is the truth of the cause of suffering. Nibbāna, which is without suffering or the cause of suffering, is the truth about the cessation of suffering. The noble eight-fold path, which leads to

#### 4. The Four Right Efforts

nibbāna, is the truth about the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

Let us pay respects to the innumerable number of Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas and Arahants who, having developed the perfections over long periods of time in order to realise the four noble truths and have attained nibbāna. May all the wholesome actions we do become perfections and enable us to realise the four noble truths.

