



My Homage

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- A Letter to Lord Buddha -

Lord, the Fortunate One, giver of knowledge and wisdom, the Supreme Buddha, the One who shines forth with marvellous knowledge, the possessor of wisdom open to all to share: let me indulge in worshipping the dust upon your feet and seek your blessing to write some of my reflections and thoughts.

At this time many of your disciples in Sri Lanka have lost sight of the rare opportunity to become free from suffering in the series of rebirths. They can do it by living the Noble Dispensation of the Buddha Gautama, which you established in your boundless compassion and wisdom.

What is known about your Dispensation is not as deep as it should be due to the fact that people of the stature of the Noble

*Arahats*¹ Venerable **Sariputta**, Venerable **Moggallana**, and Venerable **Kacchana** the Great have not graced our land. We do not have anyone who has reached the loftiness of your Noble Disciple Arahata **Mahinda** to teach us the Doctrine and show us the way.

For that reason, Lord, many of my countrymen do not look at life as shown by the Fortunate One. Many have not been able to find the four preliminary conditions to Stream-entry – ***the companionship of good persons, hearing the Good Law of the Dhamma, wise reflection and living in conformity with the Good Law of the Dhamma***. Also for that reason, many have no serious commitment to understand the Fortunate One's Doctrine. They have fallen victims to wrong views and indulge with relish in practices unapproved by you and contrary to the Doctrine.

Lord, the Fortunate One, we still have the good fortune of reading the Dhamma you spoke on different occasions. We look up to you in wonderment at the marvel of your wisdom.

We have volumes containing your Doctrine and some of them contain long discourses. In the first convocation of the Doctrine, your disciples, the Noble Arahats, named one the Long Discourses, ***Digha Nikaya***. In the chapter ***Silakkhandha*** therein there are thirteen discourses. The second chapter is named

¹ Arahants – The enlightened disciples of Lord Buddha.

Mahavagga. There are ten discourses in it. In its first discourse named **Brahma Jala Sutta** you spoke thus about the Supreme Net:

“Meritorious Bhikkhus, the Perfect One’s physical body exists with the cords of craving that bound it with the process of existence, although they were really destroyed at the beginning of enlightenment. As long as the Perfect One’s physical body exists Devas and human beings will see Him. But, when the human body breaks up and the life-span is ended devas and human beings will see Him no more.

Monks, just as when the stalk of a bunch of mangoes has been cut, all the mangoes on it go with it, just so the Exalted One’s link with the process of becoming has been cut: as long as the body exists, Devas and humans will see Him, but at the breaking up of the body and the exhaustion of the life span Devas and humans will see Him no more.”

Lord, the Fortunate One, when we were reading about those metaphors spoken by you, pain and sorrow overwhelmed us. Your physical body with its thirty-two marks of the perfect human form would no more be seen. We remember the advice you gave your disciple the Venerable **Vakkali**, “Vakkali, of what use is seeing this decaying body of mine? If a person sees the Doctrine he sees me. If a person sees me he sees the Dhamma.” We read about **Vakkali** in the **Vakkali Sutta** of the **Samyutta Nikaya**.

Lord, the Fortunate One, that surely is so. That surely is so. Even at this time when 2,551 years have elapsed after your **Parinibbana**², we see you through the Doctrine. We make sculptures in your name and pay homage to them. But, in this aeon of the Great Bhadra, the marvellous human being born the fourth Buddha in the name of Gautama we see only through the Doctrine you spoke.

Lord the Fortunate One, we read in *Digha Nikaya* your discourses – ***Brahma Jala, Samannaphala, Ambattha, Sonadanda, Kutadatta, Mahali, Jaliya, Sihanada, Potthapada, Subha, Kevaddha, Lohicchi, Tevijja, Mahapadana, Maha Nidana, Maha Parinibbana, Maha Sudassana, Jana-vasabha, Maha Govinda, Maha Samaya, Sakkapanha, Maha Satipatthana, Payasirajañña, Pathika, Udumbarika Shanida, Cakkavatti Sihanada, Aggañña, Sampasadaniya, Pasadika, Lakkhana, Sigalovada, Atanatiya, Sangiti*** and ***Dasuttara***.

Therein are three discourses spoken by the Chief Disciple **Sariputta**. They are ***Sampasadaniya, Sangiti*** and ***Dasuttara***. There is also a discourse of the Arahata **Kumara Kassapa** after the Fortunate One attained **Parinibbana**. It is called ***Payasirajañña***.

It is marvellous that all the discourses, whether spoken by the Fortunate One or by his Noble Disciples the Arahats, are con-

² Parinibbana – The passing away of Arahants or Lord Buddha. They will not be born again after their passing away.

nected so perfectly by idea, word and syllable. There is nothing whatsoever in the discourses for doubt or conflict.

We read with diligence the discourse ***Atanatiya***, the protective verses originally recited by the four Deva Kings with the Fortunate One's approval, for the protection of disciples who may be harassed by hostile non-human beings.

We read with inspiration and awe the great discourse on mindfulness, ***Maha Satipatthana Sutta***, in which the Fortunate One spoke about developing right concentration by establishing right view, thus reaching the fruition of the Path.

Many of my countrymen are not seriously committed to reach the fruition of the Path by following the footsteps of the Fortunate One's Doctrine. Some say that a person cannot reach fruition of the Path by following the footsteps of the Fortunate One's Doctrine.

Sadly, they do not know that such a negative thought amounts to misrepresenting the Fortunate One's marvellous penetrating wisdom and self-confidence. These words of the Fortunate One reverberate through me: "Bhikkhus, I claim perfect enlightenment. No ascetic, learned Brahmin, deva, Mara or Brahma has challenged me in that respect and rebutted my claim. Having not met any such person who challenged and disagreed, I am possessed of calm, free from all fear and fully self-confident."

Lord, the Fully Enlightened One, we have read about the greatness of the Fortunate One's self confidence in ***Vesarajja Sutta (Anguttara Nikaya: Catukka Nipata, Bhandagama Vagga)***.

However, there are others in my country who have not had that privilege. Some even attempt to challenge the Fortunate One where ascetics, learned Brahmins, Deva, Mara and Brahma have retreated.

Some say that Nibbana cannot be reached in the present era – that a person cannot understand and realize the Four Noble Truths – that being a Bhikkhu is a pointless enterprise – that tranquillity and concentration have no real meaning – that reaching the fruition of the Path within the Dispensation of the Supreme One is impossibility.

Lord, the Fully Enlightened One, there are such cantankerous people who speak wrongly. Sad indeed it is to see such misguided people propel themselves and others who listen to them to rebirths in Hell.

Lord, the Fully Enlightened One, we read in ***Maha Parinibbana Sutta*** about the last days of the Fortunate One. We could not restrain tears welling in our eyes at the thought of those moments that brought sadness to the world who venerated the Fortunate One. The final chapter in the altruistic life of the

Fortunate One was written in detail into that discourse. It was as if we were in the presence of the Enlightened One during those moments when time itself must have stopped.

When the Fortunate One was faint with thirst the Venerable Elder Ananda went searching for water, and when he could not find good water and returned with empty bowl, what sad thoughts of trepidation and foreboding enveloped the Venerable Elder Ananda we will never know.

When the Fortunate One was preparing to rest beneath two Sal trees in the **Upavattana** grove celestial beings showered heavenly blossoms to make a bed. Unseasonal blooms of Sal flowers covered the ground and formed a soft fragrant carpet. A cool breeze wafted through the park carrying an ethereal perfume. A silent music of deep sadness pervaded the minds of all living beings.

The Venerable Elder Ananda took all these happenings to be a miracle. But the real miracle was the unshaken, untainted mind of the Fortunate One in those moments.

Since the Fortunate One came to be known as the 'Fully Enlightened One' the day He abandoned all fetters and defilements, He remained fully enlightened – all fetters severed and all defilements abandoned – until the finality of bodily life in Maha Parinibbana.

Even in those last moments the Fortunate One advised the Venerable Elder Ananda that the way to pay homage to the Buddha is to follow the Dhamma faithfully. That thought was also a miracle.

Lord, the Fully Enlightened One, we consider ourselves extremely fortunate people. We have the auspicious opportunity to read the Long Discourses as well as the Middle-length Discourses. There are 152 discourses of the Fortunate One in the Middle-length Discourses (*Majjhima Nikaya*). There are also discourses of the Noble Arahats **Sariputta**, **Moggallana**, **Maha Kaccana** and **Mantani Putta Puñña**. It is marvellous the way the great Arahats collected and grouped the discourses during the First Dhamma Convocation.

Lord, the Fortunate One, the Middle-length Discourses are divided into three groups. The first group is named the 'First Fifty' (*Mula Pannasaka*). There are five categories, each category containing ten discourses. *Mula Pariyaya*, *Sihanada*, *Opamma*, *Maha Yamaka* and *Cula Yamaka* are the five categories.

The second group is named the 'Middle Fifty' (*Majjhima Pannasaka*). There are five categories in the Middle Fifty group, each category containing ten discourses. *Gahapati*, *Bhikkhu*, *Paribbajaka*, *Raja* and *Brahmana* are the five categories.

The third group is named 'Upper Fifty'. There are five categories in the Upper Fifty group: **Devadaha**, **Anupada**, **Suññata**, **Vibhanga** and **Salayatana**. The **Salayatana** category contains twelve discourses, while the other four categories contain ten discourses each.

Lord, the Fortunate One, those discourses shine forth a light as penetrating and illuminating as the brightest sun at the end of an aeon. Your wisdom is beyond our comprehension. Readings of the discourses expose us to the light and cause our darkness of delusions to disintegrate. Every repeated reading of your discourses makes a new reading experience. No sight for the eyes, sound of music or flavour of food can equal the rapture that arises from your discourses.

Describing living beings who can cultivate wisdom and insight, you spoke in a simile: a lotus growing in the mud of a pond awaiting the sun to blossom. In the pond of human society there are such lotuses. Thus you accepted Brahma **Sahampati**'s invitation to speak the Doctrine with these compassionate words: "I open the doors to the chest of ambrosia so that those who hear me can enhance their faith."

Lord, the Fortunate One, we have your Connected Discourses named the **Samyutta Nikaya**. Just as a wandering herd of animals search for a drink of water in a parched desert, we have been

wandering in search of wisdom, and then we found a deep reservoir in an oasis.

There are 7,762 discourses in ***Samyutta Nikaya***. The Noble Arahant Maha **Kassapa** had the honour of reciting these discourses at the historic First Dhamma Convention at **Rajagaha**. We have now a ***Samyutta Nikaya*** consisting of fifty-two sections preserved through a succession of disciples. There are five categories: ***Sagatha, Nidhana, Khandhaka, Salayatana*** and ***Maha Vagga***.

In the category ***Sagatha*** there are eleven connected subjects spoken as quatrains (***gathas***) for the benefit of Devas, Sakra, Brahmas, Mara and **Yaksha** beings. In the category ***Nidhana*** there are nine connected subjects dealing with the real nature of and order of the Dhamma.

It explains in depth the law of dependent origination. Those of us who lack understanding of the law of dependent origination easily fall prey to wrong views such as the annihilation view, view of uncaused-ness (***ahetuka Vada***), personality-belief and ego-illusion.

Lord, the Fortunate One, when we understand the cause and effect of life as a function of dependent origination, we know how deluded we have been in the conduct of life, and we are silenced by the terror of ***samsara***. We understand how important it is to recognize the five groups of clinging.

The ***Khandhaka*** category consists of thirteen connected subjects dealing with the five groups of clinging. We learn that all things in this world are impermanent and non-self. They are in a constant state of change – they are effects that change with causes and end with the end of causes. Only by thorough attention to the meanings of the discourses could we begin to get a glimpse of the impermanent nature of all things.

We learn that consciousness is illusive like a mirage. It is also likened to a seed growing upon the earth, where corporeality, feeling, perception and formations are the soil upon which the seed of consciousness grows. Greed is the irrigation that provides sustenance for the seed to grow. We marvel at your unparalleled knowledge of life.

The ***Salayatana*** category consists of nine parts. We learn about the mental processes on which the six internal bases depend.

The category ***Maha*** consists of twelve parts. We learn about the power of the faculties (***indriya bala***), the Four Noble Truths, the factors of enlightenment (***bojjhanga***) and how we can progress towards Nibbana by practicing mindfulness of in-out breathing. What we can learn about life through such unshackled wisdom is beyond comprehension.

Lord, the Fortunate One, you are the perfect embodiment of kindness. You are wisdom. You are the light of the three worlds. You are the perfect friend. The only way we can show our gratitude is to rely on your Dispensation and assimilate it into our lives – faithfully follow the Doctrine to reach the fruition of the Path and inspire in other disciples the way to the Three Refuges.

Lord, the Fortunate One, at times your discourses are brief – as brief as one or two sentences – but explicit. You have the perfect command of word and thought.

Some discourses deal with one subject. The Noble Arahats have compiled 9,552 discourses dealing with one to eleven subjects in a compendium named **Anguttara Nikaya**. It has eleven parts: the part of one subject, of two subjects, and continuing up to the part of eleven subjects.

These discourses show the incomparable style of your perfect speech. You have perfectly understood the individual strengths and capacities of your disciples, and spoken to one and all at the same time.

The chapter of eleven subjects contains discourses which show that Arahats can attain absorptions while perceptions still remain with them. That chapter gives us encouragement and strength to get a scent of the supra-mundane bliss.

We have another treasure-chest of your wisdom contained in a volume named ***Khuddaka Nikaya***. In it we find some special discourses in a category named ***Khuddaka Patha***.

There is a compilation consisting of 423 quatrains divided into 26 categories. It is named the ***Dhammapada***. Lord, the Fortunate One, these are truly unique, as always. They are lines that outline your Doctrine. This is the essence of the Doctrine.

Lord, the Fortunate One, whenever we the worldly ones are overwhelmed by pleasure or pain we utter words that have no meaning, or when the words do have some meaning, they may not be relevant to the occasion. When your mind and body were in perfect repose and rest, you were yet in complete control of your sense-bases – just as an expert charioteer would control a six-horse chariot by means of the reins firmly in his grasp. On certain occasions that brought joy or sorrow you spoke the Doctrine in place of emotional utterances. We uplift our minds by reading your ***Udana*** quatrains.

Lord, the Fortunate One, ***Itivuttaka Pali*** is Doctrine pure. ***Atthaka Parayana*** in ***Sutta Nipata*** brings tears of joy. Arahāt Bhikkhus and Arahāt Bhikkhunis recited quatrains of praises for you and the Dhamma in ***Thera Gatha*** and ***Theri Gatha***. We have learnt from you accounts of departed Peta spirits born as such due to unwholesome actions committed because of wrong views, and Devas born as such due to wholesome actions committed because

of right views. We learn about them in ***Peta Vastu*** and ***Vimana Vastu***.

In your wisdom, you promulgated monastic codes of conduct for the guidance of the Community of Monks. They are contained in ***Parajika Pali, Maha Vagga Pali, Culla Vagga Pali*** and ***Parivara Pali***.

If your disciples of modern times follow the ***Vinaya*** monastic codes of conduct those whose minds are murky will become clear. In those with clear minds they will become clearer. Such clearness of mind will help Bhikkhus to exist in dignity and live uncomplicated lives. That would further help Bhikkhus who cultivate good moral practice and who are already disciplined to continue to practice the Doctrine undisturbed. It would undoubtedly prompt undisciplined, immoral members of the Brotherhood to repent in shame and dread of unwholesome behaviour.

Lord, the Fortunate One, we cannot boast much about the state of affairs in the land of my birth. However, if the way of the **Tathagata** is understood well, and the doctrine and codes of monastic conduct are ardently practiced, the future for your Dispensation in Sri Lanka may become brighter.

Lord, the Fortunate One, today people who twist and turn the Doctrine for private profit and commercial benefit also ignore

the codes of monastic conduct. They have become a powerful lobby. They have infiltrated many parts of our community.

Those who want to uphold the Doctrine and the codes of monastic conduct are a weak and powerless group today. They are immobile before a tide of non-Doctrinal Buddhists. Disciples who wish to pursue the Paths and their fruition receive discouragement and taunts. But there are those who take courage.

Lord, the Fortunate One, you are our mentor. You are our teacher. You have shown us the way. We are your disciples. You are omniscient. We are yet blinded by ignorance.

Lord, the Fortunate One, from thus afar, I beg your leave to adorn my head with the dust of your feet – the dust from your boundless walks of love for humanity.

Lord, the Fortunate One, May you stretch your feet to me so that I can adorn my head with the dust of your feet.

Lord, the Fortunate One, I am trying to see you through the Dhamma. I am just beginning to see the dust of your feet.

