

Bodhi Leaf Publication No. 33

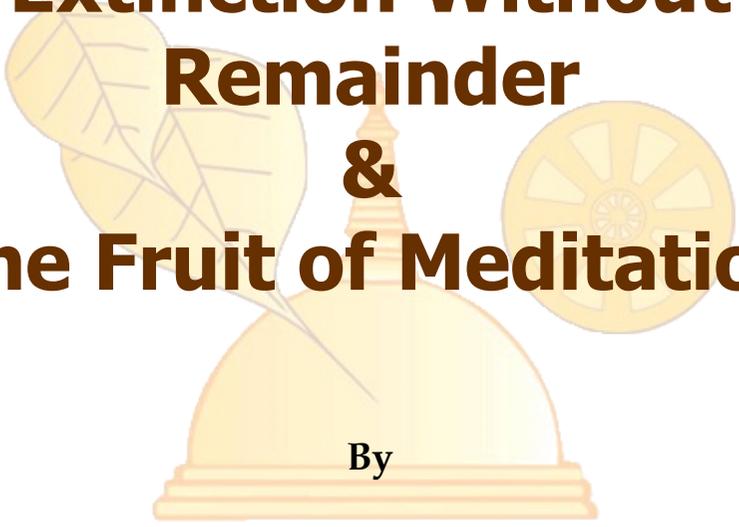
Extinction Without Remainder & The Fruit of Meditation

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu



BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Extinction Without Remainder & The Fruit of Meditation



By

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

**Buddhist Publication Society
Kandy • Sri Lanka**

Bodhi Leaves, No. 33

Copyright © Kandy; Buddhist Publication Society,
(1967)

BPS Online Edition © (2008)

Digital Transcription Source: Buddhist Publication
Society

For free distribution. This work may be republished, reformatted, reprinted and redistributed in any medium. However, any such republication and redistribution is to be made available to the public on a free and unrestricted basis and translations and other derivative works are to be clearly marked as such and the Buddhist Publication Society is to be acknowledged as the original publisher.

Extinction without Remainder

Extinction without remainder [1] is approached in two ways. In one method, one should habitually maintain the extinction without remainder of the attachment expressed as 'This is I' and 'This is mine'. In the other method, when the body is about to break up one should let go of everything, including body, life and mind. Let them be extinguished for the last time, and do not allow any fuel whatsoever for another birth to be left or desired. One should therefore use the first method as the regular daily practice. When the body is about to break up, or in an accident when one does not die on the spot but has some full and clear consciousness left for a time, one should use the latter method. If one dies suddenly and is extinguished with the consciousness of one who has practised according to the first then the result is similar; that is, one does not wish to the reborn.

The first method should be practised regularly either before bedtime or fresh from getting up, or whenever one has the spare time to purify the mind. One should compose the mind until it becomes steady by counting

the breaths, or by whatever method suits one best. This should be done for a time, and then one should investigate various things in order not to be attached to them, or to cling to the view that they are one's own. There should be no exception whatsoever. One should see that they are only dependent factors circulating in the wheel of life. If one is attached to anything, one is bound to suffer immediately. Circulation in the wheel of life is a direct suffering. Every time one is born, one suffers. However one is born, it is suffering. As whatever one is born, it is suffering according to the type of birth. For instance, if one is born as a son, one suffers as a son. If one is born a rich man, one suffers as a rich man. If one is born as a poor man, one suffers as a poor man. If one is born as a good man, one suffers as a good man. If one is born as a bad man, one suffers as a bad man. If one is born as a fortunate man, one suffers as a fortunate man. If one is born as an unfortunate man, one suffers as an unfortunate man. Therefore, nothing is better than not to be born as anyone: that is extinction without remainder.

When we speak of 'birth' it means not only birth from a mother's womb, but also the birth of the mind; that is, of the idea 'I am such' which arises from time to time — for instance, I am a son, I am a poor man, or a rich man; I am a good-looking person, or I am an

ugly person; I am a fortunate person, or an unfortunate person, and so on. These are what we call grasping thoughts of 'I am such' and 'Mine is such'. This 'I and mine' is called grasping. It is born from the womb of its mother, which is ignorance. It is born thousands of times each day, and whenever it is born, suffering is unavoidable. Whenever the eye sees forms, or the ears hear sounds, or the nose smells, or the tongue tastes, or the body touches through the skin, or the mind thinks of past events and makes them into a complete story, the word 'I' will be born immediately if one does not keep the senses under control. And as soon as the 'I' arises, suffering must also occur. Therefore one must be careful never to let the 'I' poke its head out from its mother's womb. When the eye sees forms, or the ears hear sounds, and so on, one should have the wisdom to know what to do with them, or one should remain unperturbed. The act of seeing or hearing is quite all right, provided that one never allows the 'I' to be constructed out of desire or feeling connected with the object which one sees or hears. If this is done, we can say that the 'I' is not born. That is, it has no existence. When it is not born it does not die, and so there is no suffering. This is what I mean by saying that to be born does not only mean physical birth direct from the mother's womb. It also means the birth of the idea of 'I' from its own mother's

womb—ignorance.

Here, extinction without remainder means not allowing the 'I' to arise. Since it has ignorance as its mother, one should kill its mother with knowledge, or with the wisdom that there is nothing worth being attached to.

On the other hand, the thought of 'I' may arise when one is not mindful. If one tends to be unmindful very often, it can be cured by being ashamed or afraid. One is ashamed that one has given way to ignorance, which is the chief characteristic of undeveloped minds, and is unworthy of those who aspire to true knowledge. By being afraid I mean that there is nothing more dangerous than the birth of a thought dominated by ignorance. It opens the way to craving, and these two are the double gates of hell and all states of suffering. In this way, uncorrected ignorance leads to ruin. When there is often shame and fear of this kind, mindfulness will gradually get better until one becomes a person who follows the road to extinction without remainder perpetually.

Every day, before bedtime and on getting up, one ought to keep an account of this business of cultivating the way towards extinction without remainder, for one should know the income and expenditure all the time. This is done by taking a

survey of one's thoughts and actions. It is more beneficial than prayers and should be practised as an adjunct to one's regular meditation, either before or after it.

This business of extinction without remainder is not connected with gazing at an object, or seeing colours or visions with closed eyes, or seeing strange miracles, or sacred beings, It is concerned with intelligent wisdom or direct clear awareness. If one really has perfect mindfulness, it can produce bodily and mental lightness; an indescribable bodily and mental ease. But one must never think of this, because to do so would make it a source of new grasping. If that happens it will never be extinguished, but will remain forever. That is, it will be born endlessly and will be the cause of even worse worry than before.

Those who are not successful in practising insight are those who want to grasp happiness, and they aim at Nibbāna according to their own way of grasping. The 'I' always arises in the view of Nibbāna which each person grasps. It will never be extinguished in that way.

Therefore, if one wants something to contemplate, one must contemplate, that there is nothing to cling to, even such a thing as Nibbāna. *Sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*: all things should not be grasped at.

To summarise, one must have a clear understanding of non-attachment constantly, every day and night, awake or asleep. One should maintain intelligent wisdom all the time. Never let the grasping by way of 'I' or 'This is mine' occur. Even if one happens to die during one's sleep, one still has the possibility of not being born again. This is called 'existence in extinction without remainder' - in other words the state of non-self, having only Dharma in a mind which is void of self. Then it can be said that 'self' is not born and there is only 'extinction without remainder'. If one becomes unmindful of this fact one way or another, one should be willing to start again. Do not be discouraged or get tired of this mental exercise, as we do with our physical exercise all the time. Let the body and mind receive the correct training together. Whenever one practises, with every in-breathing and out-breathing one should maintain wisdom. Then mistakes will never arise.

The second method of practice is done when one is about to die. I should say that it is a very easy practice, like jumping down steps when one is already falling over them. It would be difficult only if one dare not jump when one is falling over the steps. This would be painful, because one would fall down in a hopeless manner. After all, this body cannot continue any longer. The mind or "the owner of the house" should

therefore jump down too. At that time, one should have the wisdom to see clearly that nothing is worth grasping, hoping for, existing for, or being born again for. Let it end. Let the curtain drop on the last scene, because whatever one touches, or in whatever form of being one is born, it is all suffering. If one can practise this, the mind will lose its hope, and when the hope is destroyed there will be nothing to cling to. The mind will then be extinguished with the body, leaving no fuel behind for another birth. By 'fuel', I mean 'hope' or 'desire', or clinging to something in particular. Suppose, for instance, that one is injured by a fierce animal coming from behind, or one is run over by a car, or is crushed by a falling building, or is suddenly murdered, and so on. Should there be any consciousness left, even for a second, one should, at that moment, direct one's mind towards extinction without remainder or clarify this idea in the mind in the way that one is used to practising every day and night. Then allow the mind to be blown out. This is enough for 'jumping down the steps' towards extinction without remainder. When the mind is blown out without having any time to become conscious, one should regard the practice of the awareness of extinction without remainder, which is contemplated on and aimed at perpetually, as the basis of extinction. It is still extinction without

remainder.

If one suffers from great pains or torturing illness, one should stick out one's mind to receive this great pain and make a mental remark: 'The more painful it is, the sooner extinction without remainder will come. Thanks to the pain!' When this is done, the joy in the Dharma will curb all pains. They will not appear, or at most will be very slight. Thereby we shall be restored to our normal sanity, and then we can laugh at the pain itself.

Suppose that one suffers from an illness such as paralysis and one is to die of that disease. One should hold that one's self has ended when the illness numbs the body. The body that is left with winking eyes has no meaning. This is because one's mind has been inclined to extinction without remainder before one was taken ill, or when one still had perfect control of the body. Therefore when that control is lost it should be the end of it all. Although the life is not yet ended, there is nothing to be called 'This is I' or 'This is mine.' Therefore, when one's body is still in a good condition one should complete the extinction without remainder with the help of intelligent wisdom. It will remain effective until the time of the illness, even in the case of paralysis as mentioned before. There will be no failure nor any possibility of being defeated by any pain whatsoever, since one has destroyed the 'I'

completely with the body still in sound condition.

To summarise all methods of practice, one must understand extinction without remainder in two categories; namely, one must have a mind really filled with wisdom, clearly understanding that there is nothing to hold on to, or to grasp. In this mind completely void of clinging and attachment there is no 'I' or 'This is mine.' There is only Dharma, the absolute deliverance which is nominally called 'The Three Gems' or 'The Path of Deliverance', or whatever it is which is the sublime hope of those who cling. But we shall not attach ourselves to these things. This is extinction without remainder, or Nibbāna. In its full sense 'Ni' means without a remainder and 'bāna' means going, or blowing out. Nibbāna therefore means going without any remainder. It has the characteristics of a meaning, a practice, and a blessing as described above.

Work all work with Void-Mind,
Give the fruits to the Void.
Eat from the storage of Void.
Die well from the first day.

Dharma, Blessings and Loving kindness to all beings.

The Fruit of Meditation

The second *fruit of meditation* [2] is that the mind is fully prepared to have penetrating insight into all the phenomena, for practising meditation is like sharpening a knife for cutting cleanly, or like polishing a glass so as to see clearly. A well-trained mind is amenable like a tame monkey or elephant. It is active, strong and unwavering under the impulse of passion, anger, hate, envy and the like. Such a mind cannot be overpowered by these defilements. When these evil forces try to stimulate the mind, there arises a sense of humour and one laughs at them, and so they cannot distract the mind which is well trained.

When your mind is endowed with these two fruits of meditation, namely the Immediate Profit and the Penetrating Insight, you can see the world through inward sight. Henceforth nothing in the world can prick you through your sense organs. Nothing can lead your eye, nose, ear, tongue or body into temptation. Your mind will be free from all kinds of temptations and attachments. All worldly objects or allurements will appear to be something humorous. You can laugh them off. You will feel as if the world as a whole is reduced to a handful of something and is completely in your grip, for it cannot delude your

mind while you see it inwardly in its real nature. If you can establish your mind in this state and do not lose your inward sight, no matter in what posture or place you may be, it must be regarded as a very great attainment of stability. But as you are not yet very skilful, for your introversion or intuition is newly grown and undeveloped, it may easily fade away. So you must guard it with all your efforts. As the Scriptures say: Just as a chief queen takes care of the child in her womb who will one day be a Wheel-Turning Monarch (a world Emperor ruling by righteousness), lest she should have a miscarriage, so one should guard diligently one's newly-grown insight until it is stable. For its sake you should willingly give up income and rights in much the same way as when we are ready to sacrifice everything upon contracting a fatal disease. To this end, you must live in an environment which is suitable for meditation and avoid disagreeable persons and places in the same way as a sick person avoids taking things which disagree with him.

Now you should also know that the practice of controlling the mind in this manner does not make you abnormal or disagreeable to society, or make you walk, stand or sleep in unusual or strange ways. Also, you are not supposed to sit meditating all the time or everywhere you go, for after you have gained mastery

over meditation, the taste of it becomes one with your mind. Although you have done or practised meditation for the first time, your mind is bathed in the pleasing taste of it for a considerable time until, for want of heedfulness on your part, it fades away. Defilements such as passion, delusion, anger, hatred and jealousy can hardly pollute you. If you are a politician you can debate carefully, patiently and convincingly. If you are a missionary you can laugh off the strongest opposition and mockery of non-believers. Whatever may be your occupation or profession, you can do it successfully and you will be self-sufficient. You may go to any place or associate with anybody, and you will be able to maintain mindfully the state of equilibrium, or what has now become a normality for you. All that has been said will suffice to show how the mind well trained through the practice of meditation is useful both from the material as well as the spiritual point of view.

So, to conclude this brief account of meditation, we have seen that mind control results in happiness and Immediate Profit or *ditṭhadhammikatta* and makes you able to attain still higher states. To see things in their real nature or to attain Buddha-dhamma calls for one-pointedness of mind. The stronger the one-pointedness of mind you have, the easier and more rapidly you can attain Buddha-dhamma In case you

fail to attain the Dhamma now, you will manage to attain it before long if you make it your way of living and are determined to practise it all years and months until the end of your days.

There is another important way that should be taken into consideration for attaining Buddha-dhamma. That is to serve others. It means to render help to others by teaching or showing the way to Buddha-dhamma itself. When you have trained your mind to the extent that you can keep a check on your emotions, you are able to teach or guide others in proportion to the experience that you derived therefrom. The Buddha disapproved of teaching what one cannot put into practice by oneself. But he encouraged the teaching of that which one can really practise. The Buddha himself served humanity in this respect. Teaching others is beneficial, for one teaches oneself as well regarding the attainment of Buddha-dhamma, in the cultivation of benevolence or friendly feeling, and moreover the intellect is developed. Also, one should know that this is the line of conduct that the Buddha set forth as an ideal way of conduct. Therefore I exhort you, out of your compassion, to help others towards their emancipation, by guiding them to the extent you have emancipated yourself. The friendly feeling that you cultivate through guiding others is very beneficial for the concentration

and culture of mind. This is so because when you are cross-questioned you have to investigate and think over the issue carefully and deeply. You have to understand the matter thoroughly before you can reply. So in this way, by helping others you help to elevate yourself. We find in the *Vimuttāyatana Sutta* that some people attained the summum bonum while trying to explain to others that very matter, i.e., regarding the summum bonum itself. This is because some individuals have a strange kind of mentality in that they can better and more easily think and feel delighted when they teach or advise others. In the case of such people, new ideas flash into the mind and phrases leap to the mouth simultaneously and they, out of their deep understanding, feel very much exhilarated all the time. So it is clear that to try to think in order to guide others when asked is not only to enlighten others but to enlighten oneself at the same time. Thus it is something desirable and to be practised; and it is clear that the line of conduct explained above constitutes a salient feature, and that to serve others is very beneficial for the attainment of Buddha-dhamma.

In conclusion, may I repeat that the way to attain Buddha-dhamma is to harbour no feeling of attachment to anything, no matter whether sense-objects, views or one's own assumed (supposed) 'self.'

All troubles arise from attachment, which has ignorance as its mother. The feeling of attachment is an instinct which is common to all creatures who can think, and the more one thinks (outwardly), the stronger the attachment will be. The power of thinking makes one able to enjoy the different kinds of tastes of sense-objects more and more. And the more one clings on to the taste, the stronger the bond of attachment becomes.

What I mean is that man should use his faculty of thinking for higher values; that is to say, he should try to be free from self-deception in proportion to the products of his brain. So let the production of your mind be your servant rather than being your master. Let it be helpful rather than destructive to your wellbeing. It should not delude you. Man must be better than the animal by using his power of thinking in a proper and constructive way. His knowledge should not bring about his own ruin. He should possess decisive knowledge with regard to good and bad, right and wrong.

To do away with attachment is to gain that wisdom which drives away ignorance. When a man has no attachment or attraction, the very forms, sounds, etc., do not delude him, for they lay bare to his insight their real nature. Man can then handle them in the right way; that is, they can no longer exercise an influence

on him in terms of passion, grievance and the like. On the contrary, they become helpful and instructive and promote his quietude or healthy state of mind and body. The moment you dismiss the feeling of attachment from your mind, you realise the Buddha-dhamma radiating in you. You discover or rediscover what the Great Buddha discovered and taught. Every one of us should attain it, for it marks the standard of perfection in manhood. This is the end of the holy life. This is the realistic ideal, or aim of life. You must strive for it, for you can raise yourself above the world and worldly phenomena, and can control them thereby. You can be free from or above all the problems of life.

Indeed, no problems of life can touch you and you become superior to all worldly things. There is no state of your being, whether monk or nun, layman or laywoman, male, female, young or old, which can be a hindrance to you, and there is no form, sound, odour, taste or tangible thing in this world or in any other world—truly, there is absolutely nothing whatsoever which can in the least disturb your majestic quietude. Indeed, the only thing left is an immovable and unmoved state where there is no birth, old age, suffering or death. This state is the very perfection of the values of life which everybody who earnestly follows the Great Buddha, the Enlightened One, the

Perfect One, hopes for and sets his heart on.

Notes

1. Translated from the Thai by PrieB Bunnage. [\[Back\]](#)
2. From *Towards Buddha-Dhamma*, translated by Nagasena Bhikkhu [\[Back\]](#)

Table of Contents

Title page	2
Extinction without Remainder	4
The Fruit of Meditation	13
Notes	21