

Nyanaponika

A Farewell Tribute

Edited by

Bhikkhu Bodhi

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Nyanaponika: A Farewell Tribute

**Life Sketch, Bibliography, Appreciations,
and Selections from the Writings of
Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera
(1901–1994)**

**Edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi
Buddhist Publication Society
Kandy • Sri Lanka**

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Preface

For the world Buddhist community, and especially for followers of Theravada Buddhism, one of our era's shining guides to the Buddha Dhamma was the German Buddhist monk, the Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera. Born in Hanau, near Frankfurt, in 1901, Ven. Nyanaponika became a self-convinced Buddhist by his twentieth year. His urge to fathom the essence of the Dhamma led him, in 1936, to Sri Lanka, where he entered the Sangha as a pupil of Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera, the first Buddhist monk from Continental Europe. Under this great authority on Theravada Buddhism he obtained the keys he needed to unlock the doors to the treasury of Dhamma.

Ven. Nyanaponika brought to his understanding and expression of the Buddha's teachings a rare spiritual maturity which qualified him to serve as one of the foremost interpreters of the Dhamma in the second half of the present century. His commitment to the Dhamma was based not only on his own personal quest for truth, but on an unshakable conviction that the timeless Doctrine of the Enlightened One offers the most viable solution to the spiritual crisis faced by modern man. Hence, moved by a deep sympathy for humanity, he devoted his life as a monk to the task of spreading a knowledge of the Dhamma among those who might be receptive to its message. The supreme expression of this endeavour was the creation of the Buddhist Publication Society, which he co-founded in 1958 and served as its longtime President and Editor. It was above all his wise guidance, his overflowing compassion, and his dedication to the Dhamma that transformed the BPS into a major Buddhist publisher bringing the Buddha's teachings to over eighty countries around the world.

Through his own original writings, both in English and in German, through his translations, and through his editorial guidance of the BPS, Ven. Nyanaponika made one of the most significant contributions to Theravada Buddhism in our time. But for those of us who were privileged to know him personally, through close association, Ven. Nyanaponika was more than the scholar, the writer, or the editor. He was a living fount of Dhamma, one who gave light and understanding, advice and encouragement, consolation and inspiration. By his character and life he demonstrated that the Dhamma is a living reality, a reality that still has the capacity to transform and elevate those who make it the pivot of their lives.

On 19th October 1994, after an illness of almost two months, Ven. Nyanaponika passed away peacefully at his domicile of 42 years, the Forest Hermitage in the Udawattakele Reserve near the upcountry town of Kandy. His death occurred on the last day of the Vassa, the annual rains retreat observed by Buddhist monks since the time of the Buddha. It was his 57th rains as a bhikkhu. Once again, another luminary of the Sāsana was extinguished, demonstrating the universal law of impermanence.

The present volume is a shared attempt by his friends, students, and admirers to pay a farewell tribute to this great emissary of the true Dhamma, whose selfless labours brought the light of the Buddha's teachings into the lives of so many. We offer this small volume to his revered memory as a token of thanks for the inestimable help he gave to us—as a teacher, a spiritual guide, and a friend: We also offer it to our readers in the hope that it may provide them with a picture of what has become so rare today: a man of true wisdom and lofty character who can serve as a spring of inspiration and as a model for us to emulate.

Bhikkhu Bodhi

Felicitation Message

THE MOST VENERABLE
MADIHE PAÑÑASĪHA MAHĀ NAYAKA THERA

SUPREME PRELATE OF THE UNITED AMARAPURA NIKĀYA

Germany has long been known as a land of profound thinkers, and it is thus not surprising that two of the foremost Theravada Buddhist monks in our time are of German origin. These two monks, who were linked in the relationship of teacher and pupil, are Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera and Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera who both passed more than fifty years as distinguished members of the Mahāsaṅgha in our monastic fraternity, the Amarapura Nikāya.

Ven. Nyanatiloka, the teacher, was the founder of Island Hermitage in Dodanduwa. He was a prolific author and translator whose books convey an air of unmistakable authority. Already in the 1920s his reputation spread from Sri Lanka to Germany, drawing to this island many bright young men intent on enduring the hardships of the monk's life in a simple monastery far from their homeland. His most illustrious pupil was Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera who arrived in 1936 and entered the Order at Island Hermitage. It did not take the pupil long to prove himself a capable heir to the tradition of German monastic scholarship started by his teacher. After he mastered the Tipiṭaka and Pali, and gained proficiency in meditation, Ven. Nyanaponika devoted his mature years in the Sangha to sharing the Dhamma with others. His own books, lucid and inspiring, have helped to illuminate the Buddha's path for many thousands of people the world over. His monumental work in founding and guiding the Buddhist Publication Society has brought the light of the true Dhamma to over eighty countries. Last year our Amarapura Nikāya showed its appreciation of his great achievements by conferring on him the honorary title Amarapura *Mahā Mahopādhyāya Sāsana Sobhana*, "Great Mentor of the Amarapura Nikāya, Ornament of the Teaching."

Now that mighty pillar of the Sāsana is no longer among us. On 19th October 1994 his body succumbed to the universal law of impermanence, which holds sway over all conditioned things. But though his body has perished, his legacy should not be allowed to fade into oblivion. We should keep that legacy alive for all the Buddhist world to witness, and-for future generations to cherish. It is only by having noble examples of Buddhist personalities before our mind's eye that the Sāsana can live and flourish in our hearts.

Hence it is truly a worthy deed of merit for the Buddhist Publication Society to be publishing this commemoration volume as a way of paying tribute to Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera, an outstanding son of the Buddha who made Sri Lanka his adopted home. May this little volume serve to inspire future generations with the noble life of your revered Patron! May the blessings of the Holy Triple Gem enable you to continue your valuable work of spreading the light of Dhamma to the far corners of the earth!

Bhavatu Sabbamaṅgalaṃ

PART ONE

LIFE AND WORKS

1. KEY DATES IN THE LIFE OF VEN. NYANAPONIKA MAHATHERA

- 1901 Born in Hanau, Germany, 21st July
- 1916 Finishes schooling; starts apprenticeship in book trade in Kattowitz
- 1920 Further vocational training in Leipzig and Munich
- 1922 Moves with parents to Berlin; first contacts with German Buddhists
- 1924 Moves again with parents to Königsberg; starts a Buddhist discussion group and lending library
- 1932 Father passes away; moves back to Berlin together with his mother
- 1933 Loss of employment in a publishing house; active in Berlin in Jewish self-protection organization
- 1935 In December leaves Germany with mother for Vienna
- 1936 Travels to Ceylon; novice ordination at Island Hermitage, 4th June
- 1937 Higher ordination in Dodanduwa, 29th June
- 1938–39 Monk's life in Gampola and Bandarawela
- 1939 March: mother arrives in Ceylon; September: with other German males, detained in internment camp in Diyatalawa
- 1941 Transferred to internment camp in Dehra Dun, India
- 1941–46 Life in internment camp; translation work
- 1946 Returns to Ceylon; resides at Island Hermitage
- 1952 Moves to Forest Hermitage, Kandy; travels to Burma to discuss plans for Sixth Buddhist Council; meditation under Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw
- 1954 With Ven. Nyanatiloka, participates in opening of Sixth Council
- 1955–56 Continued travels to Burma; participates in final session of Sixth Council
- 1956 Mother passes away in Colombo at age 89, 16th July
- 1957 Ven. Nyanatiloka passes away at age 79, 28th May
- 1958 Founding of Buddhist Publication Society, 1st January
- 1968–81 Annual trips to Switzerland; meetings with European Buddhists
- 1978 Elected honorary member of German Oriental Society
- 1984 Retires from editorship of BPS, June
- 1987 Awarded honorary doctorate from Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka
- 1988 Retires from presidency of BPS, August; appointed BPS's distinguished Patron
- 1990 Awarded honorary doctorate from University of Peradeniya
- 1993 Conferred honorary title of Mahā Mahopādhyāya Sāsana Sobhana by Amarapura Nikāya
- 1994 Passes away, 19th October

2. LIFE SKETCH OF VEN. NYANAPONIKA

VEN. BHIKKHU BODHI

The person who was to become known as the Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera was born on 21st July 1901 in Germany—at Hanau, near Frankfurt—as the only child of a Jewish couple, Isaak and Sophie Feniger. His lay name was Siegmund Feniger. When he was six years old, his parents moved to an industrial town in Upper Silesia called Königshutte, whose economy was dominated by coal mines and iron foundries. There his father operated a shoe shop.

The young Siegmund attended school in Königshutte, where he studied Latin, Greek, and French. His parents were moderately religious Jews devoted principally to the ethical ideals and humane values of Judaism. Siegmund received a religious upbringing and even from an early age he evinced a keen personal interest in religion. On his own initiative he enrolled for extra lessons in Hebrew and studied Jewish religious texts under the guidance of a rabbi.

When he finished his secondary-school education, at the age of sixteen, he went to work as an apprentice in a bookshop in a neighbouring town, where he learned various aspects of the book trade. From childhood he was a voracious reader. Although his family situation did not permit him to pursue a university education, he was a fervent lover of books and was consumed with a burning intellectual curiosity which impelled him to read many of the great classics of Western literature and philosophy. His avid reading opened up to him new intellectual landscapes, which planted in his tender mind disturbing doubts concerning the traditional Jewish religious beliefs that he had hitherto accepted uncritically. These doubts spurred young Siegmund to an intense religious search by way of books, the only access he had to intellectual stimulation in this middle-sized industrial town.

In the course of his reading Siegmund came upon books on the wisdom of the East, including books about Buddhism and translations of Buddhist texts. Buddhism had an immediate appeal to him, an appeal which grew stronger the more he read. He found that Buddhism presented him with a balanced teaching that could satisfy both the critical demands of his intellect and the religious urges of his heart. Its lucidly realistic doctrine resolved his doubts about the origins of suffering and inspired him with its lofty conception of the goal of deliverance and the way to its realization. Although he had to pursue his Buddhist studies alone, without a teacher or even a friend to share his interests, so firm did his conviction in the truth of the Buddha's Teaching become that by his twentieth year he already considered himself a convinced Buddhist.

In 1922 he moved with his parents to Berlin, where he met other Buddhists, joined a Buddhist group, and gained access to a much greater range of Buddhist literature. It was here, too, that he first learned of a person who was to play a key role in his later life. This was the German Buddhist monk Venerable Nyanatiloka, who had been ordained in Burma in 1903 and in 1911 had established, in a lagoon in southwestern Sri Lanka, a retreat centre for Western Buddhist monks called Island Hermitage. Ven. Nyanatiloka was a prolific translator of Pali Buddhist texts, and his writings and translations, which Siegmund encountered in Berlin, impressed him with their authenticity and clear rendition of the Buddha's teachings.

In 1924 the Fenigers moved to Königsberg, in East Prussia (present Kaliningrad, in Russia). At a public lecture on Buddhism Siegmund met a convinced Buddhist who introduced him to a wider circle of Buddhist acquaintances. Together with his friends, he formed a Buddhist study circle in the city, which met for regular sutta readings and Dhamma discussions. He also started a Buddhist lending library quartered at his father's

shop. This library brought Siegmund into contact with Professor Helmuth von Glasenapp, the famous German Indologist, who was then teaching at the University of Königsberg.

One former member of a Buddhist circle in Berlin, Conrad Nell, had gone to Sri Lanka and taken ordination as a monk at Island Hermitage under Ven. Nyanatiloka. Later he went to Burma, where he died. From Sri Lanka and Burma this monk, named Bhikkhu Nyanadhara, wrote letters back to his friends in Germany describing his monk's life in the East. These letters helped to crystallize in Siegmund's mind an idea that had already been vaguely taking shape: the idea of becoming a monk himself. He now knew that there were other Western Buddhist monks living in the East, that there was a qualified Western elder to guide him, and that there were suitable facilities for his support as a monk.

This idea, however, could not be acted upon for some time. In 1932 his father died after a long illness, and Siegmund did not wish to leave his newly widowed mother alone. In 1932 mother and son moved back to Berlin, and there Siegmund rejoined the Buddhist friends he had met during his first stay in the city. But dark clouds lay on the horizon. In 1933 Hitler came to power in Germany and began his heartless program of persecuting German Jews. At first Siegmund tried his best to stand ground in the expectation, shared by many, that the persecutions would not continue long. When he lost his job with a book association because of the spreading policy of anti-Jewish discrimination, he joined the Central Committee of German Jews for Help and Self Protection (Zentralausschuss der deutschen Juden für Hilfe und Aufbau), a Jewish organization formed to protect the vital interests of German Jews. In time, however, it became clear to him that the waves of hatred, ignorance, and violence unleashed by the Nazis were gaining momentum at an alarming rate, and he realized that neither he nor his mother could safely remain in Germany. Hence in December 1935 he left Germany with his mother, heading for Vienna, where relatives of theirs were living.

Earlier Siegmund had spoken to his mother about his wish to become a Buddhist monk, and his mother, sympathetically responsive to her son's keen desire, told him that she would allow him to do so when their situation was secure. Siegmund had also written to Ven. Nyanatiloka, requesting acceptance as a candidate for ordination when conditions allowed him to come to Sri Lanka, and the older monk had replied giving his consent. Now that mother and son were outside the immediate danger zone of Nazi persecution, Siegmund felt free to act upon his resolution. He arranged for his mother to remain in Vienna at the home of their relatives, who had promised to look after her, and then he set out on his journey to the East.

From Vienna Siegmund proceeded to Marseilles, where on 16th January 1936 he embarked on a ship bound for distant Asia, scheduled to stop at the port of Colombo. When the ship reached port on 4th February 1936, a launch came out to meet it bearing on board a stately light-skinned figure clad in saffron robes. This was Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera, who had come to Colombo to welcome his prospective pupil. That same day, after lunch, the party left by car for Dodanduwa, the coastal town near Island Hermitage. The great venture had begun.

For several months Siegmund lived at Island Hermitage as an *upāsaka*, a lay disciple, preparing for ordination. On 4th June 1936, the Poson Poya day, along with three other postulants he received at the hermitage the novice ordination (*pabbajjā*). His teacher named him Nyanaponika, meaning "inclined to knowledge." (In conferring Pali names Ven. Nyanatiloka would sometimes attempt to "Palicize" part of the civilian name, and in this case he considered *ponika* the closest phonological equivalent of *Feniger*, the *f* turning to *p* in Pali, which lacks an *f* sound.) The following year, on 29th June 1937, in a mainland temple he received the higher ordination (*upasampadā*) as a bhikkhu.

At Island Hermitage, Bhikkhu Nyanaponika took regular lessons from his teacher in the Buddhist teachings and in the Pali language; on his own he also studied English, which

he had not studied earlier. Ven. Nyanatiloka, in his system of teaching, combined instructions in Dhamma with lessons in Pali, which he insisted all his pupils learn until they had acquired at least a rudimentary acquaintance with the language. His standard course of instruction lasted between six and nine months. Thereafter he left his pupils to pursue their Dhamma studies and meditation practice on their own, while he himself was always prepared to answer their questions and to provide advice and guidance.

In 1938, feeling the effects of the coastal heat, Ven. Nyanaponika moved to the temperate upcountry town of Gampola, where he lived alone in a converted brick kiln in the middle of a paddy field, obtaining his food by going on alms round (*piṇḍapāta*) in the nearby village. There he started to translate selections from the Saṃyutta Nikāya from Pali into German. Soon after his move to Gampola, on a trip to Colombo Ven. Nyanaponika befriended two English-educated Sri Lankan bhikkhus, Soma and Kheminda, who had been ordained in Burma in 1936. The three friends decided to live together and to establish a hermitage in the Gampola area, outside the village of Gampolawela, on the banks of the Mahaveli River. Soon, with the aid of lay supporters, they built their “Mahānadi Ashram,” which consisted of three huts and a hexagonal pavilion for meals overlooking the river. There the three monks lived happily in ascetic simplicity, sleeping on mats, using low tables, and living only on food collected on alms round.

The stay in Gampola lasted from late 1938 to mid-1939. Ven. Nyanaponika considered this period to be one of the happiest in his monk’s life. Each evening the three friends would watch the beauty of the sunset reflected in the river, and on full-moon nights they would meditate quietly while the splendour of the full moon was reflected in the waters and on the sands of the riverbed. He continued with his scholarly work, translating the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and its commentary into German, while Ven. Soma translated the same texts into English (the early draft of his book, *The Way of Mindfulness*, first published in 1941).

When the Nazis invaded Austria in late 1938, his mother had to leave the country along with her relatives, and Ven. Nyanaponika made arrangements for them to take asylum in Sri Lanka. The entire party arrived in Colombo in March 1939. After their arrival, Mrs. Feniger first lived in Gampola with a Sri Lankan lawyer who was a lay supporter of her bhikkhu-son. During this time Ven. Nyanaponika would sometimes share his almsfood with his mother, as the Buddha had permitted bhikkhus to give almsfood to their parents in time of need.

The idyllic sojourn in Gampola, like everything else enjoyable in this world of impermanence, was not to last. In the summer of 1939 malaria broke out. Ven. Soma suffered a bad attack and had to be hospitalized, and Ven. Kheminda also later contracted the disease. Ven. Nyanaponika managed to escape, but the danger posed by the epidemic made continued residence in Gampola impossible. When Ven. Soma recovered, the three friends moved to Bandarawela. At first they lived in a vacant house until Ven. Kheminda had recovered from his bout of malaria, after which they moved into an abandoned tea factory. Meanwhile his mother had moved to Kandy, and from there to Colombo, where she lived with the distinguished Sri Lankan couple, Sir Ernest and Lady De Silva, patrons of the Island Hermitage. The De Silvas offered to be guarantors for his mother, thereby enabling her to obtain a residence visa for Sri Lanka. During this period Ven. Nyanaponika came to visit her every four to six weeks. As a result of the explanations of the Dhamma given by her son, and the impressive example of her Sri Lankan sponsors, she herself embraced Buddhism, taking the Three Refuges, the Five Precepts for regular observance, and the Eight Precepts on Uposatha days.

When war erupted between England and Germany, all men of German nationality living in Sri Lanka (then the British colony of Ceylon) were taken to civil internment camp at Diyatalawa, in the Uva province near Bandarawela. Ven. Nyanaponika and his teacher, Ven.

Nyanatiloka, were interned at the camp from September 1939 through a large part of 1940. Being of Jewish origin, Ven. Nyanaponika was temporarily released for three weeks in the spring of 1940. During this brief respite, he brought Vens. Soma and Kheminda to Island Hermitage to look after the premises during the war and to provide good companionship for Ven. Nyanaloka Thera, the senior Sri Lankan disciple of Ven. Nyanatiloka. After the fall of France in June 1940, the British Crown reversed its lenient policy towards Jewish refugees, apprehensive that the refugees could in some way pose a danger to security. Hence the German Jews, including Ven. Nyanaponika, were again arrested after their three weeks of freedom and were taken back to the camp at Diyatalawa.

After the Japanese captured Singapore, Sri Lanka was considered to be in a war zone. Consequently all civil internees had to be moved to a region of safety. The German bhikkhus, too, were sent in late 1940 to the large civil internment camp in north India, at Dehra Dun in the Himalayan foothills. It was in this camp that Ven. Nyanaponika spent the next five years of his life (1941–1946), the bitter and trying years of World War II. But the periods of internment did not deter the indefatigable scholar-monk from his work. During the stay at Diyatalawa he prepared a German translation of the *Sutta Nipāta*, to which he later added extensive notes. When he was sent to India, he brought along many books and continued his studies and translations. While the outside world was embroiled in deadly conflict, Ven. Nyanaponika, safely if not always comfortably ensconced in the camp at Dehra Dun, quietly translated into German the entire *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, the first book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, along with its commentary, the *Atthasālinī*. While engaged in these translations, he also wrote down his reflections on the Abhidhamma philosophy, notes which became the nucleus for his later *Abhidhamma Studies*, written in English after the war. He prepared, too, in German an anthology of texts on Satipaṭṭhāna meditation which, with some alterations and additions, was later incorporated into *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*.

At Dehra Dun Ven. Nyanaponika found himself assigned to the same barracks as another German, a few years older than himself, who had also immersed himself in the Buddhist traditions of the East. This was Lama Anāgārika Govinda, who had first lived as a Theravādin lay ascetic in Sri Lanka and then had relocated to India, where he had taken up the study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism. The two men quickly became fast friends. Their friendship deepened over long walks together in the hills and valleys of Dehra Dun (which the camp authorities permitted them) and over intense Dhamma discussions, which often closed with the two “agreeing to disagree.” From Lama Govinda, Ven. Nyanaponika learned Sanskrit, and the two scholars cooperated in translating, from the reconstructed Sanskrit, portions of the philosophical treatise *Catusataka*, by the Madhyamika philosopher Āryadeva. Their warm friendship continued through the years, with periodic exchanges of letters and a meeting in Europe in 1972, until the death of Lama Govinda in early 1985.

In September 1946, a full year after the war had ended, Ven. Nyanaponika and his teacher, Ven. Nyanatiloka, as well as the other internees, were released from the camp. On his return to Sri Lanka, after a short reunion with his mother in Colombo, he proceeded to Island Hermitage. He and Ven. Nyanatiloka found that in their absence the hermitage had been maintained in very good condition by the Vens. Nyanaloka, Soma, and Kheminda. Resettled at the hermitage, he continued his work on the

Abhidhamma, writing up the results of his investigations in his book *Abhidhamma Studies*. In early 1951 both Ven. Nyanatiloka and Ven. Nyanaponika were made citizens of Sri Lanka, the country of their adoption, towards which they both always cherished a deep sense of affection and gratitude.

In January 1952, Ven. Nyanatiloka and Ven. Nyanaponika travelled to Burma for consultations preparatory to the convening of a “great Buddhist council,” the sixth in Theravada Buddhist history, to be held in Rangoon starting in 1954. The two German theras were asked to help formulate plans for propagating Buddhism in the West and for

producing fresh translations of the Pali Canon into English. In Rangoon, Ven. Nyanaponika discussed his concerns with the devout Buddhist Prime Minister, U Nu. He lodged at Thathana Yeiktha, the famous centre for Vipassanā meditation run by the renowned meditation master, Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw. When the conference was over, Ven. Nyanatiloka returned to Sri Lanka, but Ven. Nyanaponika stayed on for a period of meditation training under Mahāsi Sayādaw. This experience impressed him deeply, inspiring him to write a book about this system of Vipassanā practice for the benefit of others seeking clear instructions in Buddhist meditation.

Before his trip to Burma, already in 1948 Ven. Nyanaponika had written a book in German on meditation (*Satipaṭṭhāna*, Christiani Verlag, 1950), in which the directions for practice were derived from information he had received from Ven. Soma and Ven. Kheminda, who had undergone training in meditation in Burma in 1937. This book also contained the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in Pali and in German translation, along with its commentary and a long introductory essay. Following his experience in Burma, Ven. Nyanaponika rewrote this book in English, incorporating into it instructions for practice based on the experiences and guidance he had gathered under Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw at Thathana Yeiktha. The result was *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, first published in Sri Lanka in 1954 and, in 1962, in a revised and enlarged edition in England. This book, translated into seven languages and still maintained in print after 33 years, has achieved the status of a modern Buddhist classic. It is generally regarded as the finest treatment of Satipaṭṭhāna meditation in English.

In 1951 Ven. Nyanatiloka moved from Island Hermitage to a cottage compound in Udawattakele Forest Reserve, on a wooded hill just above Kandy, a region whose temperate climate he found more congenial to his health in his advanced years. This compound, called Forest Hermitage, had been gifted to the Sangha by its owner, Mrs. F. R. Senanayake. When Ven. Nyanaponika returned from Burma in 1952, he joined his teacher at his new residence, which subsequently became known among the townsfolk as “the German temple.” In 1954 the two theras returned to Burma for the opening of the Sixth Great Council. As Ven. Nyanatiloka had laryngitis on the opening day, Ven. Nyanaponika read his teacher’s message to the assembly. After a short stay in Burma they returned to Sri Lanka. Ven. Nyanaponika made several subsequent trips to Burma during the Council and attended the closing session in 1956, alone as his teacher’s health was failing. Unless there were Greek monks present at one of the earlier Buddhist councils held in India, the two German elders have the unique honour of being the only monks of Western origin ever to participate in a major synod of Theravada Buddhism.

In 1956 his mother, who had still been living in Colombo, passed away at the age of 89, and in 1957 Ven. Nyanatiloka expired, aged 79. As a token of gratitude to his teacher, Ven. Nyanaponika, at the latter’s request, edited his German translation of the complete *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, consisting of five volumes, which he retyped in full himself. He also compiled forty pages of indexes to the work.

The most significant turning point in Ven. Nyanaponika’s life as a Buddhist monk came on New Year’s day 1958 when, along with two lay Buddhist friends from Kandy, he founded the Buddhist Publication Society. Ven. Nyanaponika became the Editor and Honorary Secretary of the Society (and later its first President). One friend, Richard Abeyasekera, became the Assistant Secretary; and the other friend, A. S. Karunaratna, became the Honorary Treasurer. Originally the founders intended to issue only a limited number of small booklets in English on various aspects of Buddhism, chiefly for distribution abroad; after completing a series of about 25 booklets they would end this venture into the publishing world. However, the enthusiasm with which their first publications were received encouraged them to continue with their efforts, and thus the BPS continued to grow and expand into the prolific organization it is today.

From the time of its birth, Ven. Nyanaponika dedicated himself without reservation to the work of the Society. While Mr. Abeyasekera, with great devotion and dauntless energy, attended to the numerous details of the Society's administration, Ven. Nyanaponika supervised the editorial and production wings. As Editor he examined all manuscripts himself, endeavouring to ensure that they faithfully reflected the authentic spirit of Theravada Buddhism. In the early days of the Society not only did he attend to his editorial responsibilities, but he also performed such menial tasks as typing address labels, pasting stamps on envelopes, walking to the printers two or three times a week, and arranging the mailing list. While an enlarged staff soon relieved him of these chores, through the years he personally oversaw every detail in the actual process of book production—from the solicitation of manuscripts to the review of cover designs—until the finished product was in his hands.

He himself wrote a good number of the Society's Wheel publications (see Bibliography) and also elicited from other authors works which he nurtured to completion with encouragement, suggestions, advice, and constructive criticism. He expended an enormous amount of labour, almost invisible in the end product, in bringing to light the works of several Dhamma companions of his who had predeceased him. Several times he edited, revised, and enlarged Ven. Nyanatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary* and *Guide through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka* as well as his major German books. He collected, edited, and organized the scattered writings of his friend Francis Story, producing the three volumes of this writer's collected works published by BPS. He edited Mahāsi Sayādaw's *Practical Insight Meditation* and translated from the Pali the same meditation master's treatise *The Progress of Insight*. He also edited and prepared for publication Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli's *The Life of the Buddha according to the Pali Canon* and *A Thinker's Notebook*. Indeed, so complete has been Ven. Nyanaponika's dedication to the dissemination of the Buddha's Teaching in the world through the Buddhist Publication Society that from 1958 until his retirement his personal biography virtually merges into the history of the Society he helped to found.

Starting in 1968, each year Ven. Nyanaponika made a trip of one or two months' duration to Switzerland. He originally went on the invitation of an old friend from the Jewish self-defense movement in Nazi Germany, Dr. Max Kreutzberger. During his trips to Europe Ven. Nyanaponika visited Buddhist groups, particularly in Switzerland, and thus came to be regarded by many as a "spiritual advisor" for Theravada Buddhism in Europe. These annual trips ended in 1981, when weakening legs made travel difficult.

As advancing age began to sap his strength and a long-standing glaucoma condition limited his ability to read, in 1984 he retired as Editor of the BPS, handing over this responsibility to the present writer. He continued actively as President of the Society until 1988, when he retired from this position as well, accepting appointment as the BPS's distinguished Patron. During his later years his work brought him the recognition he so well deserved, both internationally and in the country of his adoption. In 1967 he was made an honorary fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science. In 1978 the German Oriental Society appointed him an honorary member in recognition of his combination of objective scholarship with religious practice as a Buddhist monk. In 1987 the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, at its first convocation, conferred on him its first-ever honorary degree of Doctor of Literature. In 1990 he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from the University of Peradeniya. And in 1993 the Amarapura Nikāya, the chapter of the Buddhist monastic order into which he was ordained 56 years earlier, conferred on him the honorary title of *Amarapura Mahā Mahopadhyaya Sāsana Sobhana*, Great Mentor of the Amarapura Nikāya, Ornament of the Teaching.

Despite minor infirmities and advancing blindness over the last four years of his life, Ven. Nyanaponika had enjoyed remarkably good health through his 93rd birthday on 21st July 1994. His last birthday was celebrated joyously by his friends and the BPS staff with the

release of the BPS edition of his book *The Vision of Dhamma*, a collection of his writings from the Society's *Wheel* and *Bodhi Leaves* series. In late August, however, the inexorable process of aging suddenly accelerated, ushering in a combination of ailments that signalled the approaching end. Ven. Nyanaponika was brought to a private hospital for medical treatment in late September, but at his own request he was returned to the Forest Hermitage after a week. Three weeks later, in the hushed quiet of the pre-dawn forest, he breathed his last.

The body of Ven. Nyanaponika was cremated on 23rd October at the Mahaiyawa Cemetery in Kandy at a funeral attended by religious and lay dignitaries as well as by his many friends and admirers. On 29th January, after the traditional "three-month alms offering," his remains were interred at the Island Hermitage in Dodanduwa, where he had spent his formative years as a monk. And there they rest, near the remains of his revered teacher, Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera, and his former Dhamma companions, Ven. Ñāṇamoli Thera and Ven. Soma Thera.

The entire Buddhist world, and in particular the English- and German-reading followers of Theravada Buddhism, will forever be indebted to Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera for his life of selfless service in transmitting the wisdom of the Buddha to humanity.

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PART TWO

APPRECIATIONS

1. THE SILENT DHAMMADUTA

VEN. PIYADASSI NAYAKA THERA

Both Ven. Nyanaponika and I were born in July, and each year he would write to me to wish me a happy birthday, which always brought me joy and inspiration. However, the contents of his last birthday letter to me, in July 1994, the occasion of my 80th birthday, evoked in me an emotional upsurge—*saṃvega*. He wrote: “Bhante, I still remember the first time I met you in 1936, when I came to Vajirārāma as an upāsaka, along with my teacher (Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera). I wish you good health and long life to continue your valuable Dhamma activities.”

I too vividly recall that meeting. I can still see, in my mind’s eye, the handsome young man who had only recently arrived from Germany, with his indefatigable energy, bubbling with enthusiasm. Little did I realize, at that time, that two decades later we would be dwelling in adjacent hermitages in the Udawattakele Reserve in Kandy, linked in a common cause, working side by side for the dissemination of the Buddha Dhamma: he as the Editor for the English-language publications of the Buddhist Publication Society, I as the Editor of the BPS’s Sinhala-language series, *Damsak*.

I think the two of us must hold the world record for mileage covered in walks through the Udawattakele forest. Every day we used to take two walks together: a long walk in the morning before we started work, and a shorter walk in the evening. During our walks we discussed the Dhamma, problems confronting us in our Dhamma activities, and the BPS, which was then in its initial stages. He used to say, “We must work unceasingly, with determination; to see the BPS grow by leaps and bounds,” and I remember well his joy at the appreciative responses of those who received the early publications. When the first English edition of his *Heart of Buddhist Meditation* was published in 1962, he presented me a gift copy with the inscription: “To Ven. Piyadassi, my companion in the forest walks.”

Kamma and nature had lavished on him some of her choicest gifts—a vigorous physique and a keen intellect, which latter gift did not dim even to the very end of his life. He possessed an indomitable courage combined with deep care for others. He had a boundless reserve of energy and profound insight into the Dhamma, which he shared with so many through his writings and correspondence.

Now that gentle voice is stilled; closed forever are those wise old eyes. His disappearance from the face of this earth was just as unostentatious as his life. A cloud of sorrow hangs dark and heavy over all those who knew him and loved him. All meetings end in partings (*saṃyogā viyogantā*). He passed away demonstrating to all of us the inexorable working of that universal law—the impermanence of all conditioned things.

May Ven. Nyanaponika attain to that supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna (*anuttaraṃ yogakkhemaṃ nibbānaṃ*).

2. A GREAT DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA

VEN. BHIKKHU DHAMMAVIHARI

In the Buddhist world, both in Sri Lanka and abroad, the Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera has been a great personality of the present century, vibrant enough to survive a few centuries to come. He belonged to a generation of lofty savants, distinguished scholars who blazed a trail of Buddhist scholarship and learning dating back even to the last century. They were of

illustrious German origin, renowned for their scholarship as well as for their approach to life.

In Sri Lanka itself, Ven. Nyanaponika's teacher, Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera stimulated the study of Theravada Buddhism in the English medium, both here and in his own native land. Ven. Nyanaponika became a true and worthy successor of his teacher, carrying to completion the latter's hopes of disseminating the Dhamma on a worldwide scale. It has been a wonderful source of comfort in my life that I had the good fortune to know Ven. Nyanaponika for nearly fifty years, both personally and through his writings. He was a true disciple of the Buddha.

Like his teacher, he epitomized what renunciation (*nekkhamma*) really means. Both teacher and pupil showed that the life of renunciation means the relinquishing of one's accustomed lifestyle, with its comforts and pleasures, for another style of life prescribed by the Buddha as the sure way to deliverance from sorrow.

Ven. Nyanaponika was an indefatigable scholar and researcher who ceaselessly worked at the Buddhist texts well before the arrival of the computer. I have personally witnessed his dedication to the exploration of the message of the Dhamma and its vitality, even at times of scarcity. Austerity was the keynote of his life. He will always be remembered as a faithful traditionalist who toiled diligently for the promotion of the Buddha Dhamma, with a profound veneration for the commentarial tradition.

Just four months before his death, in the company of my teacher, the Venerable Madihe Paññāsiha Mahānāyaka Thera, I met Ven. Nyanaponika and Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi at the Forest Hermitage. The Mahāthera-blessed me in my transition from my lay life to my present life as a monk, and wished me well in the new role he expected me to play as a disseminator of the Dhamma. He was indeed *suvoaco mudū anātimānī*: soft-spoken, lovably gentle, and humility itself personified.

I now humbly pay this debt of gratitude to this great savant for the invaluable service he has rendered to the cause of the Dhamma the world over. At the same time I let it be known that all of us left behind shall sadly miss him. But I comfort myself in the belief that we may possibly meet somewhere in saṃsāra, because of the likeness of our aspirations and our activities in the trail of Buddhism.

3. MY HEARTFELT AND LASTING GRATITUDE

VEN. AYYĀ KHEMĀ

I first met Ven. Nyanaponika at the Forest Hermitage in May 1979, when I travelled to Sri Lanka with the intention to take ordination as a Theravādin nun. On arrival I was deeply impressed by the simplicity of the hermitage, the natural beauty of the surroundings, and the immediately noticeable compassion of the Mahāthera towards someone quite unknown to him, asking for assistance.

It seemed especially easy to talk to Ven. Nyanaponika and to tell him my reasons for wanting to become a nun. There was an immediate bond between us, partly due to the fact that both of us were German Jews who had escaped the persecution of the Nazis and had found refuge in the Buddha's Teaching. Whenever possible we spoke in German, which Ven. Nyanaponika seemed to enjoy, not having many opportunities to converse in his mother tongue. Ven. Nyanaponika gave me a letter of introduction to Ven. Nārada Mahāthera of Vajirārāma, in Colombo, who, he said, would be more suitable as preceptor, as he would be able to make a real ceremony of it while he himself could just give the precepts very simply at the hermitage. Ven. Nārada was happy to comply with his request and arranged an unforgettable ceremony with about 600 guests and twenty children bearing gifts for me. I was overwhelmed by the kindness and thoughtfulness shown towards a stranger both by Sangha and laity.

Soon after my ordination I was invited to give some meditation retreats to lay people. The very first of these took place at Island Hermitage, established by Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera Ven. Nyanaponika's teacher, in 1911. This led to the establishment, several years later, of Parappuduwa Nuns Island on the same lake. It seemed fitting to the lay people of the area that a German nun should establish a refuge near the one set up many years earlier by the first great German scholar-monk. Appropriately enough, most of the donations for Nuns Island came from German supporters, and most of the first women who came to reside at the island were from Germany. Today Nuns Island remains open to women of all nationalities under the guidance of Sister Dhammadinna, the first nun ordained there, who studied with me for five years on the island. The creation of Nuns Island forged another bond between Ven. Nyanaponika and myself. While I was staying at Parappaduwa, I began to study very closely the BPS's Wheel booklets. Those I selected to learn by heart were the ones translated and commented upon by Ven. Nyanaponika, which I found the most lucid and understandable, always referring the teaching to day-to-day life. When questions arose, I made it a habit as often as I could to visit Ven. Nyanaponika, which meant a 6-hour journey each way. I was always welcome and my most vivid memory of our discussions is the Mahāthera rising up vigorously from his chair, putting his hand unerringly on the book he wanted, opening to the page needed without a search, and answering my questions with reference to the appropriate sutta. No question remained unanswered, and I can say from the bottom of my heart: all my Dhamma knowledge is derived from Ven. Nyanaponika's translations of the suttas and his comments and explanations. I am happy that I was able to tell him this personally and express my unending gratitude to him for his guidance and wisdom.

As a tribute to Ven. Nyanaponika and his teacher, Ven. Nyanatiloka, jhāna Verlag (the publishing firm connected to my present meditation centre, Buddha-Haus, in Germany), is engaged in publishing several of their unpublished manuscripts of German translations from the Pali, which have never before appeared in German. Another of these manuscripts, Ven. Nyanatiloka's annotated translation of the *Dhammapada*, was published a few years ago and has found many interested readers. I was also delighted to send Ven. Nyanaponika some tapes of my Dhamma talks when his eyesight had failed and he could no longer read, and I was thrilled to hear that he appreciated the contents of the tapes. To me, this felt like an acceptance into the lineage of the German Sangha, more decisive than the mere fact of ordination.

On the day of Ven. Nyanaponika's cremation, I was giving a meditation course in Germany. The sixty participants did a loving-kindness meditation for Ven. Nyanaponika, wishing him a smooth transition to his new existence. On that occasion I was able to publicly voice my gratitude to him.

May Ven. Nyanaponika's example be a guideline to all of us who experienced his unending kindness and wisdom.

4. THE VERSATILE TEACHER

VEN. AYYA NYANASIRI

While many people know about Ven. Nyanaponika through his published writings and his work in founding and directing the Buddhist Publication Society, very few know about the scope and depth of his teachings to individuals. Ven. Nyanaponika shared his knowledge of the Dhamma on a wide scale both through correspondence and through personal meetings. He had a large circle of friends and acquaintances with whom he corresponded, sometimes regularly, sometimes for special purposes. Those with whom he exchanged letters included LB. Homer, late President of the Pali Text Society; the former Burmese Prime Minister U Nu, who sought the Mahāthera's advice concerning translations from the Pali Canon; the psychologist Erich Fromm, who wrote a short but very perceptive essay on Ven.

Nyanaponika (included as the Foreword to *The Vision of Dhamma*); and the Lama Anagārika Govinda, his old friend from the internment camp at Dehra Dun. He had also conducted an ongoing correspondence with the former Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who had taken a keen interest in Buddhism and had even undergone an eight-day meditation retreat in Burma in late 1961.

Ven. Nyanaponika's writings drew to his Forest Hermitage a steady stream of visitors from the far corners of the earth, people seeking personal advice or clarification of their understanding of Dhamma. To all, Ven. Nyanaponika exhibited an unfailing generosity of heart born from his joy in sharing the Dhamma. Apart from prominent Buddhist leaders, teachers, and scholars, his visitors included, among many others, such thinkers as psychiatrist R.D. Laing, who underwent intensive meditation practice in Sri Lanka in the early 1970s; the New Age science writer Fritjof Capra (*The Tao of Physics*); and the innovative biological theorist Rupert Sheldrake (*A New Science of Life*). One notable visit in late 1968 came from the Trappist monk and author Thomas Merton, who during the last years of his life discovered deep springs of spiritual inspiration in Buddhism. Merton had stopped off in Sri Lanka en route to a monastic conference in Bangkok and visited the Forest Hermitage. At the end of an animated discussion with

Ven. Nyanaponika, he told him that after the conference he hoped to return to Sri Lanka and to continue the discussion. Ten days later, during the conference, Merton died in his hotel room in Bangkok.

Numerous scholars of Buddhism wrote to Ven. Nyanaponika asking for clarification of obscure Dhamma points. He was always willing to reply at length, answering their questions fully. When an occasional letter came which disagreed with the Theravada scriptures, Ven. Nyanaponika would take the time to explain the teachings, adding his own insights, yet never in a confrontational or argumentative manner.

But the majority of people who came to the Forest Hermitage were ordinary people interested in Buddhism, or Buddhist lay people with personal problems. He treated all such with patience, with concern for their well-being—for he was the embodiment of *mettā*. More than once he said: "If I err, may I err on the side of *mettā*." To those inquirers who were not Buddhists but were drawn to the teachings, he presented the Dhamma clearly but uncompromisingly; he never lapsed into trite untruths such as "all religions teach the same thing." If a visitor professed another religion, he would scrupulously avoid doctrinal disputes, out of respect for the visitor's convictions. Instead, he would try to offer the visitor insights from the Dhamma that would be helpful in his or her spiritual life. When a visitor came with a personal problem, he would first put the visitor at ease, ask about his family, past problems, and how they were resolved. Then he would listen to the visitor, listen with an open heart of sympathy that would completely win the visitor's confidence and trust. Once he understood the problem being presented, he would unerringly choose the precise teaching that could help the person to see the problem in the light of the Dhamma. Countless are the number of people that Ven. Nyanaponika helped in this way.

For the meditator, Ven. Nyanaponika was a true *kalyāṇamitta*, able to intuit the meditator's experience, to point out the relevant sutta and commentarial explanations of the experience, and to add his own knowledge of the states of meditation. Then, with gentle but firm encouragement, he would explain the next step to be taken on the path of meditation.

Ven. Nyanaponika was a multifaceted monk who used every opportunity to point out that Buddhism is relevant to people's everyday lives. He showed that the Dhamma offers solutions to our common problems in life by enabling us to see things as they really are, and thereby to live in harmony with ourselves, in harmony with others, in harmony with the world.

5. A LIVING DEMONSTRATION OF DHAMMA

AMADEO SOLE-LERIS

Like many others, I owe a debt of immense gratitude to Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera. Back in 1972, when I was just beginning to discover the Dhamma, I was advised to read his classic *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*. I took that advice—and I never looked back.

The ground had been prepared for me by a prior study of that other classic of 20th-century Buddhist literature, *The Word of the Buddha*, the anthology of texts from the Pali scriptures compiled and translated by Ven. Nyanaponika's teacher, Ven. Nyanatiloka. The reading of the Buddha's own words had already been an eye-opening experience. Turning to *The Heart* immediately afterwards proved an invaluable confirmation and experience in two ways: first, by the book's specific content, which made clear the paramount importance of practice (over and above intellectual understanding) in pursuing the Buddha's way, and most especially the need to train and develop one's mind through the systematic cultivation of right mindfulness; and secondly, by its tone and manner—serene, unemphatic yet unambiguous, and totally non-confrontational—which exemplified the same qualities of equanimity and loving care that had so struck me in reading the Buddha's own words. Here was living proof, even after so many centuries, of the qualities which the Dhamma brings forth in those who live by it.

These qualities were abundantly demonstrated afterwards in the regular correspondence I established with Ven. Nyanaponika from 1975 until around 1990, when his failing eyesight made correspondence impossible. The same qualities were demonstrated even more strikingly in the experience of personal encounter, when I was at last able _ to visit him at the Forest Hermitage in March 1984. The living memory of those brief days is as fresh with me today as ten years ago. At that time he was already almost 83 years old, and had been having trouble with his eyes and legs for some time. However, he was still robustly active, good-humoured, and always ready to share his tremendous knowledge of the Buddha's teachings and the canonical language, Pali. And always with that unassuming, open manner which is the hallmark of the true Dhamma teacher: highly informative and persuasive, often inspiring, but at all times respectful of the inquirer, never trying to force ideas or interpretations upon anyone.

For those of us who were fortunate enough to know Ven. Nyanaponika personally, what we learned from him has become an integral part of our own mental equipment, and an unfailingly helpful guide on the way towards greater understanding. For many others, his great achievement in co-founding the Buddhist Publication Society and being its main inspiration for almost thirty years has performed the same Dhamma service on a worldwide scale. Thanks to the *Wheels*, *Bodhi Leaves*, and many book publications, thousands of people in many countries have discovered the taste of Dhamma and the joy of dawning understanding. In the old words that recur in so many of the Buddha's discourses, the fruit of Ven. Nyanaponika's life has indeed been "as though someone had set upright what had been upside down, uncovered what was concealed, shown the way to one who was lost, or carried a lamp into the darkness that those who have eyes might see."

6. FROM THE FOREST HERMITAGE BEYOND

DETLEF KANTOWSKY

in this article I will offer some personal observations on the influence of Ven. Nyanaponika's writings and work on Buddhism in Germany today, but first I wish to begin by recounting my own first meeting with the Mahāthera. By 1977 news had spread in my university that I had acquired some detailed knowledge about things Sri Lanka. One day that summer a colleague from the Philosophy Department came to see me to ask about meditation centres, about which I had not heard so far, since I still considered Buddhism as only one among

many other cultural variables in my explanatory models of people's behaviour in South Asia. Nevertheless, we had a very stimulating discussion in the course of which my colleague also mentioned the name of a certain German monk who was said to live in Kandy but came to Switzerland regularly in early summer to spend a few weeks in his publisher's house in St. Gallen.

These stories came to my mind when I was with the Sarvodaya Movement leader Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne somewhere around Kandy in 1977. "Oh, you must mean Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera!" he exclaimed when I attempted to describe what I had heard about "a certain German monk." "Come, let's see him," and he took me to the Forest Hermitage in the Udawattakele Reserve. "Ari" was well known to Ven. Nyanaponika, who was fully aware of Sarvodaya's work. I was introduced, and asked permission to return later when I had acquainted myself better with the Buddhist background of the Movement.

The long interview for which I returned to Kandy on 22 March 1978 was published many years later under the title "Sarvodaya, Buddhism, and the West." Certainly, it is a testimony of Ven. Nyanaponika's deep understanding of a Western intellectual's "monkey mind" trying "to get hold" of Buddhist concepts and their "actual relevance" for social work—not only in Sri Lanka but in the Wild West as well.

Leaving aside such personal reminiscence: How could one evaluate the influence of Ven. Nyanaponika's writings and work on Buddhism in Germany?

First and foremost I would stress the penetrating guidance he has given to academics and lay people for a deeper understanding and practical application of Satipaṭṭhāna as the cornerstone of Buddhist spirituality. This guidance has been given through his books, most notably by *Geiststraining durch Achtsamkeit* (the German counterpart of *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*). Especially nowadays, when so many guidelines for "instant meditation" are offered as quick relief from suffering, this book is the classic reference for all those who have learned to go and see for themselves.

Then there is the editorial care that Ven. Nyanaponika bestowed upon the new editions of his teacher's, Ven. Nyanatiloka's, translations—the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the *Visuddhimagga*, and the *Dhammapada*. The long-term impact of these basic texts on the development of Buddhism in a "new land" cannot yet be measured. All that can be said is that these books figure prominently in the advertisements of the more serious among the many "Oriental" book agencies that have come up along with the recent "Buddha Boom."

Clearly identifiable, however, is Ven. Nyanaponika's mind as forerunner of concrete actions behind the following two manifestations of Buddhism in Germany:

(1) In his first letter to the publisher Paul Christiani in Konstanz (sent from Island Hermitage, 20 August 1949) concerning the publication of his study of Satipaṭṭhāna, Ven. Nyanaponika already suggested the scheme of a "Buddhist Hand-Library" which could begin with Ven. Nyanatiloka's *The Word of the Buddha*. This "advice" very soon matured into a series of publications under just the name which Ven. Nyanaponika had proposed ("Buddhistische Handbibliothek"), and to which he himself contributed three titles (see Bibliography). So much about spreading "right knowledge." But what about its deeper realization during periods of "right concentration"?

(2) In an early article (published in *Wissen und Wandel*, No. 7, Hamburg 1952) Ven. Nyanaponika concluded a discussion about the difficulties of life as a Buddhist monk with a suggestion to people in Germany who might consider "homelessness" as an option for themselves: "It seems to be of great importance for lay Buddhism in Germany to create first of all a 'House of Silence' (Haus der Stille), into which seriously inclined people could withdraw for a shorter or longer period of study and meditation. It might be a place for self-evaluation and preparation for novices as well as the nucleus of a future German Sangha." Ten years later this proposal led to the acquisition of a large and very beautifully situated area some 30 kilometers to the east of Hamburg by a registered group of concerned friends

of the Dhamma. Until today the “Haus der Stille,” as it is called, is still the best known centre for Buddhist studies and meditation in Germany, where all three Buddhist traditions offer courses.

Other groups in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria as well consider Ven. Nyanaponika their “patron” and spiritual advisor. Among these relationships a quality permeated that I would relate to the field of “right practice,” i.e. the Mahāthera’s compassionate sympathy, which all of us have felt so deeply when we had the chance to meet him in the Forest Hermitage or beyond. Therefore I would like to conclude my remarks on his “influence” on Buddhism in Germany with a short narrative of a Konstanz University “exile meeting” in Switzerland in 1980.

Together with a colleague from the Department of Philosophy I had invited Ven. Nyanaponika to speak to the participants of a seminar on “Buddhist philosophy.” He kindly accepted our invitation and we agreed upon 26 June as a suitable date during his coming stay in St. Gallen. But since he did not have a visa for Germany we met in the high school of Kreuzlingen, a neighbouring town just across the border from Konstanz.

Some eighty students and a few colleagues listened to Ven. Nyanaponika’s Dhamma talk. In the following discussion, one professor of philosophy tried to “corner” the Buddhist monk with tricky questions regarding rebirth in relation to the non-self concept. The Venerable quietly started to reply, but suddenly a young girl student shot up and exclaimed: “Mr. Nyanaponika! How is it that you are sitting there answering so kindly all sorts of aggressive questions!” “Well,” came the Mahāthera’s smiling reply, “I listen to the questions, I try to understand, and I answer to the best of my knowledge.” “Right attention” and “compassionate understanding,” not as a theoretical concept, but simply “shown.” I was told later that many students had understood this manifestation of the Dhamma even without further explanatory words.

7. A SHINING EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

KURT ONKEN

For the Buddhists of my own small country, Switzerland, and especially in my own life, Ven. Nyanaponika played a role of prime importance. In order to explain this, I must start with a little personal sketch of my background.

I was born in Zurich, on a sunny Sunday in the mild Swiss summer; the kamma was obviously favourable, as the sun kept shining over all my life during the eighty years since then. I had chosen very dear parents: this no one would doubt. Even before I was born, my father had embraced the Dhamma as the key to understanding human existence, having passed from the philosophy of Schopenhauer to the excellent German translations of the Buddha’s discourses by the Viennese Indologist Karl Eugen Neumann.

When my elder sister and I were children, our dear father would regularly read to us from the Buddha’s discourses. Even though we were still too young to appreciate the meaning in any depth, the words of Neumann’s translations became, in Goethe’s phrase, “the familiar sounds of our earliest years.” As I reached maturity, the value of the Dhamma became increasingly clearer in my life. As the first fruit of this, I did not have to struggle with a single one of those deep questions that the spiritually inclined European has to grapple with all his life long: in the Buddha’s Teaching all such questions were unambiguously answered. I thus became aware of the precious treasure that my father had passed on to me as a heritage. The second fruit was that I understood the value of the holy path and thus could place trust (*saddhā*) in that part of the Dhamma which can be found only on the path. Although I became aware that the Buddha’s call led from the home life into the homeless state of monkhood, I also knew that I did not yet have the strength to make such a radical step of renunciation. So I tried to follow, to the best of my ability, “the middle measure of my capacity.”

Until then I had been missing a master, a shining and living example, whom I could look to for concrete guidance. Such a teacher could not easily be found in the Europe of those days, and certainly not in the German-speaking parts. The first German Dhamma teachers, due to their dualistically trained minds, quickly went to extremes in their interpretations of the Doctrine, even to the extent of engaging in impolite polemics. It was when I met the Venerable Nyanaponika, first through his writings and then in person, that I found the shining model who complied with my conception of a pure master. He completed the circle that began with my father's inheritance and was continued by the congenial translations of Neumann.

Even before I met the Venerable in person I had found in his published works that mild tolerance, that balance of intellect and heart, that I had missed in my earlier attempts to discover a mentor. My first personal meeting with him confirmed what I had already intuited so clearly in his books. This delightful meeting took place at the home of my late brother-in-law, the publisher Paul Christiani, who (under my sister's influence) had accepted the Dhamma and had undertaken to publish several books of Ven. Nyanatiloka and Ven. Nyanaponika. Since 1968, Ven. Nyanaponika had been making yearly trips to Switzerland to visit his old friend Dr. Max Kreutzberger in Locarno. In 1970 he came to my brother-in-law's house in St. Gallen to discuss some publication matter. Fortunately I was present for the occasion.

And what was my first impression? Well, the next day I noted in my pocket diary, in the small space left for each day: "Distinguished, cultivated, kind-hearted—a real monk!"

As time went by and my friendship with the Mahāthera ripened, my initial impression was repeatedly verified and deepened. I came to know the Venerable as a person of great dignity and honour who gave delight to everyone he met or touched by his work. Beneath his calm reserve was an overwhelming benevolence and nobility of character, which would warm and brighten all those upon whom it shined, like the autumn sun. His humility and modesty concealed his greatness from the superficial interlocutor; but those who would investigate would gradually discover the depth of his understanding of the Dhamma and the loftiness of his view. His mindfulness had become, through long training as a bhikkhu, completely natural and relaxed. His teaching and his life, his knowledge and conduct, his wisdom and virtue, were a unity—each in perfect harmony with the other.

Some years after our first meeting, with the Venerable's encouragement, I established at Dicken, in the Swiss countryside, a Buddhist centre called "House of Contemplation" (Haus der Besinnung), which on several occasions he brightened with the mild shining *mettā* of his presence. In April 1974, before I bought the building, he wrote me in a letter: "I do hope that your Appenzell version of a mountain house of silence will be achieved and that it will serve the purpose intended. Such 'extraterritorial islands of Dhamma' within the territory of Māra are nowadays especially desirable." During the following years, when the Venerable made his annual trips to Switzerland, our Buddhist community had the pleasure of welcoming him at the House of Contemplation and of finding the opportunity to ask him questions concerning the Dhamma. In this way he became our real mentor and the spiritual guide of many Swiss Buddhists.

His benign personality was not the preserve of Buddhists alone. My late wife of 57 years, a devout Catholic, saw in him the qualities she expected but found lacking in the religious of her own faith. In the felicitation volume I compiled for the Venerable's 85th birthday (*Zur Erkenntnis Geneigt*, 1986) she wrote: "He spreads his benevolence and helpfulness to everybody. He feels and sees into the other person's heart, and his radar of loving-kindness meets the echo immediately.... The Venerable's sources are the Dhamma and the silence of his heart. Loving everybody, understanding everybody, these for me are the characteristics of the Saviour, in my Christian view, of a Holy One. The Venerable is the only person I see in this way. I do hope to meet one day such a noble-hearted Christian. But

I feel happy to have met such a deeply pure person and to have stayed in his peaceful presence.”

In 1994, I visited Ven. Nyanaponika in Kandy for a whole week at his Forest Hermitage, as I had done the previous year. He had allowed me to translate into German his replies to different questions of an American woman and to publish them in our series, *Bodhi Blatter*, a German-counterpart of the BPS *Bodhi Leaves*. I had read my translations aloud to him, and in his unchanged lucidity of mind he listened to the texts critically, suggesting various improvements and eliminating the word “I” from several passages of his spontaneous answers: an editorial policy typical of his character.

I preceded my short introduction to this booklet with a quotation from a sutta as the motto: “Remain serene, friends, remain serene! There is the Venerable One to help and advise you.” Now that Venerable One is no longer among us. Since the graceful ambassador of the Dhamma waited until the end of the Vassa to pass away, we should not feel sad. Rather, in a mood of thanksgiving, we should recollect his fruitful teaching of the Dhamma and the shining example he has provided for us to follow.

8. A TRIBUTE FROM A CATHOLIC FRIEND

REV. ALOYSIUS PIERIS, SJ

My first impression of Ven. Nyanaponika came from reading his *Abhidhamma Studies* in the late 1960s, when I was preparing for my doctorate in Buddhist philosophy. This book created in me the proper disposition with which the *Abhidhamma* has to be studied, and also evoked in me a sense of reverence for the man who wrote it. The author was not a philosopher in the modern Western sense, but one whose *darshana* (philosophy) was essentially a *pratipada* (a path of spiritual perfection). The book, too, was stamped by a concern that was at once philosophical and soteriological.

The book very soon led me to the man, and I found myself frequently visiting the Forest Hermitage. My discussions with the Mahāthera, in the course of these visits, ceased to be merely academic, relating only to the subject of my thesis, but began to revolve also around the practice of Buddhism. It did not take me long to realize that he was a man who practised what he taught in his books: *yathāvādī tathākārī*.

I shall never forget that day at the hermitage towards the end of 1968, when he gently raised his arms in deep joy as he welcomed me and exclaimed: “Do you know who visited me last week? Thomas Merton!” Quite insensitively, I interrupted him and said: “He is dead!” Ven. Nyanaponika paused, and said that this could not be true as he had visited him just the week before. I assured him that Thomas Merton had died accidentally in Bangkok and the news was in the paper that morning. His face fell. He took me in and described how warm and memorable that encounter was. In his *Asian journal*, published posthumously, Merton reciprocates these same sentiments. They were monks of kindred spirits.

A monk or a nun—that is, a person of any religious persuasion who is freed from the bonds of the mind—can recognize and resonate with another monk or nun of the same kind, whatever the religion. In fact, the relevance of such a possibility for the world of today dominated Merton’s mind when he attended that Inter-Monastic Congress in Bangkok, where he accidentally died. Hence his encounter with Nyanaponika Mahāthera, just prior to that, was of immediate significance for this great vision of his.

Many other eminent Christian monks who had read Merton’s *Journal* made pilgrimages to the Forest Hermitage. Among them were two outstanding world-figures: Bede Griffiths and Jean Leclercq, both of whom died in 1993. In a letter to me (dated 28.09.74) Ven. Nyanaponika mentions to me how profoundly impressed he was by these visits. Inter-religious dialogue is possible only between those who practise their religion to the full.

In my courses on Buddhism, in various universities around the world, I place Ven. Nyanaponika's *The Power of Mindfulness* on the compulsory reading list, and I take time from my class to practise mindfulness with my students. This little feature is remembered for years by these students. Invariably, in their assessment of my course, they cite this powerful little book as the most helpful element in the course.

Once I mentioned this in a letter to Ven. Nyanaponika, and in his reply (dated 30.04.88) he made a very significant remark that is worth quoting in full:

I was particularly glad to know that you appreciated this essay and its message, valid for all who are concerned with the cultivation and purification of the mind. Here is a basis for an *oekumene* on a deeper level. Yes, as far as, my limited knowledge goes, the Buddhist emphasis on mindfulness has parallels in the writings of the great Christian mystics (as e.g. "The Cloud of Unknowing," Meister Eckhart, St. John of the Cross). These three great ones have my sincere admiration, irrespective of existing differences from the teachings that I follow.

Now, according to the Venerable Monk, deeper spiritual experience of mental purification is one possible locus where men and women of the two religions can meet. Yet how many reach such a state of interior purity? But Ven. Nyanaponika suggests also another, wider area for such an encounter: the plane of the moral law. In another letter to me (09.03.89) he says:

Yes, an important part of the Dhamma unites Buddhists with deeply religious and tolerant Christians. In Buddhism, theists are regarded as *kammavādins*, and the firm belief in moral lawfulness is the foundation of spiritual life and of a healthy society.

Ven. Nyanaponika was not a Buddhist counterpart of a globetrotting evangelist: Most of his time was spent in the sylvan atmosphere of silence and solitude. Yet he should be recognized as one of the great Buddhist missionaries of our century. He reached the whole world through the booklets issued by the Buddhist Publication Society co-founded by him. His own writings had a deep impact on those who were fortunate enough to read them.

It is therefore a joy for all of us belonging to this little island that a man of such spiritual depth and such a worldwide influence lived and died here. I would like to end this tribute with a quotation from yet another letter (30.11.89). This was his last letter to me, and his last wish in that letter could also be his last words to all of us in Sri Lanka: "May the spirit of *agape* and of *mettā* bring peace to this country and instil compassion into hardened hearts."

9. A NOBLE FRIEND OF THE WORLD

VEN. BHIKKHU BODHI

In the wider Buddhist world, the Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera has long been respected as an outstanding scholar and exponent of Theravada Buddhism, as an author and translator, an editor and publisher. But those of us who had the good fortune to know him more intimately, through personal association, found that Ven. Nyanaponika fulfilled another role in our lives, one that was primary among all others. This was the role of *kalyāṇamitta*—a spiritual friend. The spiritual friend in Buddhism is something much more elevated than a social companion with whom one shares activities and interests. He is a teacher, a helper, and a friend all rolled into one. As a teacher, he points out the path towards the goal of liberation; as a helper, he assists one in walking the path; as a friend, he accompanies one along one's journey constantly giving reassurance and advice.

The Buddha often stressed the importance of spiritual friendship, declaring it to be the chief external support for a disciple's progress in the Dhamma. Ven. Nyanaponika, by his own life and character, demonstrated that the Buddha's emphasis was not exaggerated. For many people into whose lives he entered over the years he became a true noble friend,

ever ready to share with them his wisdom and understanding, to extend to them encouragement and support. In an age when human relations have become so terribly tainted by the competitive and sensualistic pressures of our commercial culture, he possessed the rare gift of cultivating deep friendships that could transform and ennoble both partners to the relationship. It is no doubt for this reason that even in his 80s and 90s he still maintained friendships that were born in the 1930s.

Ven. Nyanaponika was not a charismatic personality, the type that makes an immediate overwhelming impact upon those who enter their sphere of influence. His manner was simple, humble, and unassuming, completely free of any urge to dominate others or to compel them to accept his point of view. Personal admiration rolled off him at once like water off a leaf. When he was praised for his books, he would often quote the Chinese sage

Confucius: "I am not an originator, only a transmitter of the wisdom of the Ancients." He was so thoroughly without pretence or presumption that for one who viewed him superficially, it was easy to overlook his intrinsic greatness. As he wrote of mindfulness, he was one "whose virtues shined inwardly," and one had to get to know him well before one could fully appreciate his value. But when one did cultivate his acquaintance well, one would discover behind his modest manner a rich constellation of spiritual qualities that gave the assurance: "Here indeed is a person of rare maturity who can be trusted as a teacher and guide."

Ven. Nyanaponika could serve so effectively as a spiritual friend because his personality embodied the virtues essential to spiritual friendship. Among the most prominent traits of his character in this regard, two stand out to my mind as pre-eminent. One was a capacity for detached, balanced, careful judgement; the other was an abundant fund of warm human sympathy. These two qualities are, in fact, aspects of the great "twin pillars" upon which the entire Buddha Dhamma rests—wisdom and compassion. But here these operate, not at the lofty heights of philosophical truth and religious striving, but in the homely lowlands of person-to-person relationships—seemingly so routine, but so often full of pitfalls and disappointments.

Through his abundance of human sympathy, Ven. Nyanaponika was always ready to extend to others assistance or advice. His kindly presence conveyed the confidence, even to those who knew him only briefly, that he was one whose heart would be set on their long-range welfare and who could be counted on to help in any way possible. Through his capacity for balanced judgement, whenever he would be consulted for advice in dealing with a personal problem, he would use his keen intelligence to dissect that problem into its component strands, illuminate it from every discernible angle, and then offer suggestions that would harmonize precisely with the complex ethical, practical, and personal demands imposed by the original problem.

Ven. Nyanaponika's character was a wonderful blend of the four "sublime states" (*brahmavihāra*) of which he wrote so beautifully, with an acumen that would be impossible for one who was not imbued with those qualities himself. While he possessed an impressive dignity of bearing, he was also easily approachable. Not only did he show unfailing kindness to everyone who came to him and compassion to those in need, but he also had a discerning eye for discovering a person's latent virtues—this being a manifestation of *muditā*, altruistic joy. With heartfelt concern he would help others to become aware of their own hidden strengths, so often overlooked due to obsessive self-denigration, and he would encourage them to cultivate these qualities and bring them to maturity. He always expressed appreciation of the good qualities of others, even when they were clearly overlaid by layers of faults and failings. Over many years of the closest contact with him I never detected in him any trace of resentment, envy, or competitiveness.

His sense of gratitude too was immense. He seemed to remember any favour done to him, even long years ago, and during the final years of his life he would do a daily meditation of gratitude. Beginning with his parents, he would radiate thoughts of gratitude to the many people who had helped him in this life—his teacher. Ven. Nyanatiloka, his past Dhamma companions, his BPS colleagues, ending with his present lay supporters and friends. If we allow for the obvious differences between a perfected Arahant and one still walking the path, what he wrote of the Buddha's chief disciple, Venerable Sāriputta Thera, might almost have been written of himself: "His was no cold aloof perfection, but the richest intermingling of spiritual exaltation with the qualities that are finest and most endearing in a human being."

When I reflect upon Ven. Nyanaponika's career as an exponent of the Dhamma, I am overwhelmingly convinced that his work as an author, editor, and publisher should be seen as essentially a global extension of his capacity for spiritual friendship, so amply bestowed upon those who came into personal contact with him. His whole commitment to the dissemination of the Dhamma—especially as the President and Editor of the Buddhist Publication Society became the channel through which he could exercise the function of being a noble friend to the world: a teacher, helper, and guide to thousands of people in distant lands who would never cross the threshold of his hermitage in the Udawattakele Reserve.

As in the case of his personal friendships, so in this world-embracing friendship, too, the same two qualities prevailed—wisdom and compassion bolstered by an indomitable sense of purpose and a formidable abundance of energy. In his role as an emissary of the Dhamma, wisdom and compassion were freed from the limitations inherent in interpersonal relationships. Left to unfold according to their own inner dynamics, his wisdom could roam over the entire field of the Buddha's teachings intent on penetrating those teachings in depth, while his compassion negotiated the subtle challenges of presenting the Dhamma in ways that would guide others along the path to liberation from suffering.

Although Ven. Nyanaponika's scholarly abilities are impressive, it is not as a scholar that his true greatness lies, for his accomplishment as an exponent of the Dhamma goes far beyond the bounds of objective scholarship. In my view the crowning achievement of Ven. Nyanaponika's personal writing is the consummate skill with which he has pierced through to the essential significance of the Buddha's Teaching in its bearings upon human life today. For this task his natural gifts as well as his background had prepared him as if for a predestined assignment. His innate intelligence, his wide reading in Western literature and humanistic philosophy, and his experience growing up in Europe in the interval between two world wars: all these in combination endowed him with an extremely profound grasp of the particular spiritual and existential maladies confronting earnest men and women in the middle and late twentieth century. His study of the Buddhist texts, his capacity for thorough reflection, and his training in Buddhist meditation: these gave him the equipment he needed to diagnose these problems through the lens of the Dhamma and to prescribe an appropriate remedy.

Drawing upon both his European background and his Buddhist scholarship, Ven. Nyanaponika fashioned a distinctive *vision of Dhamma* which is at once true to the authentic Buddhist heritage yet finely focused upon the pressing concerns that weigh so heavily on contemporary man: the quest for meaning in a world that often appears meaningless, the thirst for value amidst cynicism and sensualistic abandon, the longing for an authentic path of self-transformation that can rise above authoritarianism and the fads of the spiritual supermarket. In my view his work comes to us as a shaft of the light of Dhamma refracted through a brilliant mind nurtured on the best traits of the European humanist tradition: sober, restrained, realistic, non-authoritarian; respectful of the capacity of human effort; oriented towards personal experience in the quest for truth; lofty in its aspirations yet

pragmatic in its adjustment to the raw material of human nature. However, whereas secular humanism so often ends in the blind alleys of materialism and existential despair, Ven. Nyanaponika's "Buddhist humanism" evolves into the transcendental path that "plunges into the Deathless, and has the Deathless as its consummation and final goal."

Ven. Nyanaponika's original writings are not voluminous. But what his work lacks in volume is more than compensated for by its depth of insight, breadth of understanding, and bountiful human sympathy. In these respects I would say that his writings are unsurpassed by any other exponent of Theravada Buddhism in our time. His books and essays remain stimulating even after many readings, capable of disclosing new dimensions of meaning and of imparting fresh surges of inspiration. His thought is thorough, systematic, methodical, and orderly, yet his voice speaks in warm and personal tones, gently offering the reader wise words of counsel in the proper conduct of life and in treading the path to liberation.

Beyond his own writings, Ven. Nyanaponika has made his personal vision of the Dhamma the cornerstone for an entire publishing venture, the Buddhist Publication Society. To appreciate the full extent of his contribution to the dissemination of Theravada Buddhism today, one must take into account not only the works that bear his name, but the 200 Wheel titles, the 100 Bodhi Leaves, and the numerous full-size books that were issued by the BPS during his tenure as Editor (not to mention his own translations, both into English and German). One must also realize that many of these works had been nurtured by him from start to finish, with encouragement and editorial advice, even through the stages of production. The result of this enormous investment of energy has been a virtual reference library on Theravada Buddhism that makes the wisdom of the oldest living Buddhist tradition openly available to the world.

Behind all this work stood a simple, humble, self-effacing monk, a monk diligent and conscientious in his commitment, moved by unwavering confidence in the Dhamma and by compassion for men and women groping for a sense of direction in the spiritual labyrinths of our age. Now he has left us, this noble friend, this *kalyāṇamitta* of the world. He has left us behind, feeling the void of his absence, but at the same time feeling overwhelming gratitude to him for having given us the precious gift of his friendship, and through his friendship, the gift of the Dhamma. As his successor as President and Editor of the Society he founded, I sincerely wish that we shall keep his legacy alive, keep the BPS functioning with a vitality and a sense of purpose that would have earned his delighted appreciation. And for him, my spiritual guide and closest friend, I wish that in his future sojourn through samsāra all his virtuous aspirations will quickly come to fulfilment. May he reach unhindered the supreme goal pointed to by the Buddha—Nibbāna, the Deathless!

10. SELECTED CONDOLENCE MESSAGES

Ven. Madāgama Vajiragnana
Chief Sangha Nayaka of Great Britain
The London Buddhist Vihara, England

We are deeply saddened by the demise of Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera. Buddhists all over the world to whom the message of the Buddha was transmitted by the Mahāthera. through his numerous and comprehensive scholarly works will be shocked by this news. We all owe him a deep debt of gratitude for all his sacrifices and endeavours in the cause of Buddhism, which have assisted us immensely in the exposition of the Dhamma in the Western world.

Ven. Kurunegoda Piyatissa Mahāthera. Chief Incumbent
New York Buddhist Vihara, U.S.A.

We are grieved to hear the sorrowful news of the passing away of Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera. On behalf of the American-Sri Lanka Buddhist Association and the New York Buddhist Vihara, let me express our heartfelt condolences. We always remember Ven. Nyanaponika as a great Buddhist scholar-monk who helped propagate the Dhamma not only among Sri Lankans but also among many foreign nations. His death is an irreparable loss to the whole Buddhist world.

Carto L. Dissanayake, Hony. Secretary
Toronto Mahāvihara Society, Canada

The Committee of Management and the entire membership of the Toronto Mahāvihara Society are deeply grieved at the loss of such an erudite monk who rendered invaluable service in the propagation of the Dhamma. At the Annual General Meeting of our Society, held on 23 October, a period of silence and a short session of *mettā-bhāvanā* was held to honour him and to offer him merit so that he shall be liberated from the suffering of samsāra. May he attain the ultimate goal of Nibbāna.

Ven. Walpola Kalyanatissa Thera
Das Buddhistische Haus, Berlin

It is with deep regret that we received the news about the demise of Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera. However, although the Mahāthera is no longer with us in body, his good deeds continue to live along with us. We are very grateful for all that the Ven. Mahāthera has done for humanity and for the international Buddhist community. He has made many great contributions. We hope that many others all over the world will appreciate the extent of his contribution to the furtherance of Buddhism.

Ven. Bhikkhu Visuddhacara, Spiritual Advisor
Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre, Penang

The Venerable's demise is a great loss to the Theravada Buddhist world. As one of the founding fathers of the BPS, Ven. Nyanaponika has done us great service, for we English-educated Theravādin Buddhists have learned much of our Buddhism from the BPS. As editor he brought out so many works for our benefit; as a writer, he had done so much to inspire and encourage us on the path.

The Venerable was an example to us in his discipline, diligence, and consistency; an embodiment of loving-kindness and compassion in taking on that heavy burden of writer and editor to provide us with such fine Dhamma. It is no overstatement to say that we owe the Venerable an irrepayable debt. He is a true son of the Buddha who served unstintingly, generously, and humbly. Surely, the Venerable lived according to the Buddha's exhortation, heedful in his practice and in his service to the Dhamma. Surely, the Buddha would be proud of Ven. Nyanaponika; surely, he would place the Ven. Nyanaponika as foremost among his disciples in this latter-day period in the propagation of Dhamma:

We have no doubt that the Venerable has a place in Nibbāna waiting for him, that he only has to roar his lion's roar for the earth to bear witness to his service to the Dhamma. Surely, the gates of Nibbāna must open and admit this illustrious son of the Buddha. .

But for us here on earth a light has gone out. May we have the energy and strength to follow in the path he has shown us. May we practise the Satipaṭṭhāna Dhamma with zeal and diligence till we reach our goal, the extinction of suffering. And may we, along the way, also serve our fellow human beings with as much devotion and dedication as Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera displayed.

Ven. Ajahn Viradhammo
Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, England

We have received the news of Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera's passing. He lived a long and fruitful life, and our fledgling Sangha here in the U.K. feels very much indebted to him. His lifetime dedication to the Dhamma continues to give us a great deal of inspiration for our own work on the path. May our own practice of the Buddha's Way be a tribute to all that our Venerable Mahāthera has given to Buddhism.

Ven. Brahmavamso Bhikkhu

Bodhinyana Buddhist Monastery, Western Australia

On this occasion, the Sangha of Bodhinyana Buddhist Monastery would like to express its profound gratitude to Ven. Nyanaponika Thera's life. The great Thera's contribution to the dissemination of the true Dhamma of the Lord Buddha is immeasurable. Here in the Western countries in particular, we feel as if we owe an enormous debt to Ven. Nyanaponika for pioneering the path for the spread of Buddhism in the West. The only way that we can repay that debt is by following his inspiring example, by working tirelessly to realize the fruits of the Teachings and to share them by discourse and by example.

We feel that this is not a time for sadness but even one for joy. We feel this sense of joy because we know that Ven. Nyanaponika Thera's life was well lived, supremely well lived! His human birth was not wasted. He walked the path in the very footsteps of Lord Buddha as one of his brown-robed disciples, and he shared both his knowledge and deep insights with so many others. Such an inspiring example of how a life can be lived brings tears of joy to my eyes, not tears of sadness.

We shall miss Ven. Nyanaponika since his absence now makes our own work that much harder. But we shall remember his example and try as best as we' can to come near to the high standard he set.

Ven. Thiradhammo Bhikkhu

Dhammapala Buddhist Monastery, Switzerland

We were saddened to hear of the passing of the Most Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera. Fortunately, he will continue to live on through his many literary and translation works as one of the great pioneers in spreading the Dhamma to the West.

Ven. Bhikkhu Vajiro

Bodhinyanarama Buddhist Monastery, New Zealand

This is an opportunity to express appreciation and gratitude for the life of Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera. On behalf of all the community living here and associated with this monastery I send this message, and add that we will observe a meditation period on Sunday 23rd October and will dedicate the merit to Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera.

Ursula Fluckinge von Allmen

Dhamma Gruppe, Switzerland

With these few lines we would like to express our heartfelt connection with all of you and our deepest gratitude for all that Ven. Nyanaponika was and did, especially for the great support the Dhamma Gruppe received through his wise and warm advice over all the past years. His life, and he as a person, gives us a lot of courage and great inspiration to always begin again.

Ven. Nyanajagat Mahāthera

Institute of Spiritual Culture, Bihar, India

The news about the demise of our Most Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera was deeply painful to all those who knew and revered him. On three occasions we conducted merit-

offering ceremonies to cherish a peaceful destiny for him. I consider myself fortunate to have had the rare opportunity to pay my personal veneration to Bhante earlier this year. All those moments have yet been lingering in my memory.

U. Mapa

Public Trustee of Sri Lanka, Colombo

We owe so much to Ven. Nyanaponika, particularly the Sri Lankan Buddhists, for his dedicated service rendered for the propagation of the Theravada Buddhist teachings outside of the shores of Sri Lanka. The Ven. Mahāthera, the founder of the BPS, is no more. But we can console ourselves in the fact that his noble objectives will be pursued under the able guidance and directions of his successors. It seems to be a unique feature of the law of Dhamma to find the next “link” for its continuation!

Ramiro Calle

Spanish Buddhist teacher and media agent, Madrid

I always had very great affection for Ven. Nyanaponika, and for many years I have made frequent references to him in radio programmes, on television, in magazines, books, symposia, etc. Always I have tried, with love, to spread the books and teachings of Ven. Nyanaponika, and I have recommended his works and spoken about him in many of my lectures. Since I first met the Venerable in 1974, I have had the greatest admiration for him. He is forever in my heart.

PART THREE

GEMS OF WISDOM

EXCERPTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF VEN. NYANAPORUKA MAHĀTHERA

HBM: *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*. VD: *The Vision of Dhamma*. [Page references to both books are to the BPS editions.]

THE NEED OF THE HOUR

Today’s danger is over-development of one-sided brain-activity devoted solely to material ends, in the service of a thirst for sense pleasures and a lust for power. The concomitant danger is that mankind might one day be crushed by the very creations of its own hypertrophied brain—its body-killing inventions and its mind-killing “distractions.” The remedy that will prevent catastrophic developments is the Buddha’s Middle Path. It is the eternal guardian that, if listened to, will protect humanity from shipwreck on the rocks of extremes—mental, spiritual, and social.

HBM, p. 27

A TURN WITHIN

The resolute turning away from disastrous paths, the turning that might save the world in its present crisis, must necessarily be a turning inward, into the recesses of man’s own mind. Only through a change within will there be a change without. Even if it is sometimes slow in following, it will never fail to arrive.

HBM, p. 23

A BASIS FOR ETHICS

The Buddha's teaching on the wholesome and unwholesome roots provides a criterion of good and evil that is neither theological nor authoritarian but experiential, one with a sound psychological basis offering an autonomous pragmatic motivation for avoiding evil and choosing the good. By introspection and observation, we can understand that it serves our own long-range interest as well as the good of others to restrain actions born of greed, hatred, and delusion, and to act in ways motivated by their wholesome opposites. Hence Buddhist ethics, being based on psychological fact and not on external contingencies, provides a core of moral principles valid for all time and under all circumstances.

The Roots of Good and Evil, VD, p.121

THE WAY OF FREEDOM

True freedom places on us the uncomfortable burden of everfresh responsible decisions, which have to be guided by mindfulness, wisdom, and human sympathy. The way of freedom is an arduous way because it demands of us that we break the selfforged fetters of our lusts and hates, our prejudices and dogmas—fetters we foolishly cherish as ornaments. But once we see them for what they really are, obstacles to true freedom, the hard task of discarding them will become at the same time a joyous experience.

The Worn-Out Skin, VD, pp. 21–22

A BALANCED PATH

Many inner complications are caused by extreme attitudes of the mind and by an unwise handling of the various pairs of opposites operating in life. Surrendering to extreme attitudes of any description will limit one's freedom of action and thought, and one's capacity for true understanding. The Buddha's Middle Path is a way leading above and beyond extremes and opposites. It corrects one-sided development by filling out deficiencies and reducing excess. It instils a sense of proportion, and aspires to harmony and balance without which there cannot be lasting self-reliance and effective self-help.

HBM, p. 81

THE BUDDHA'S MESSAGE

The Buddha-Message, as a doctrine of the mind, teaches three things: (1) to *know* the mind—that is so near to us, and yet is so unknown; (2) to *shape* the mind—that is so unwieldy and obstinate, and yet may turn so pliant; (3) to *free* the mind—that is in bondage all over, and yet may win freedom here and now.

HBM, p. 23

A CALL TO SELF-HELP

Emphatically did the Buddha proclaim again and again that man is in full possession of all the resources needed for self-help. The most simple and most comprehensive way in which he spoke about these resources is this method of Satipaṭṭhāna.

Its essence may be compressed into the two words: "Be mindful!" That means: Be mindful of your own mind! And why? Mind harbours all: the world of suffering and its origin, but also ill's final cessation and the path to it. Whether the one or the other will be predominant depends again on our own mind, on the direction that the flux of mind receives through this very moment of mind-activity that faces us just now.

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is of an unobtrusive nature. Its virtues shine inwardly, and in ordinary life most of its merits are passed on to other mental faculties which generally receive all the credit. One must know mindfulness well and cultivate its acquaintance before one can appreciate its value and its silent penetrative influence. Mindfulness walks, slowly and deliberately, and its daily task is of a rather humdrum nature. Yet where it places its feet it cannot easily be dislodged, and it acquires and bestows true mastery of the ground it covers.

The Power of Mindfulness, VD, pp. 71–72

VANQUISHING BAD HABITS

The growth of morally bad or otherwise detrimental habits can be effectively checked by gradually developing another habit: that of attending to them mindfully. If we now do deliberately what had become a mechanical performance, and if prior to doing it we pause for awhile for bare attention and reflection—this will allow us to make a fresh assessment of the situation, to see it directly, unobscured by the mental haze that surrounds a habitual activity with the false assurance: “It is right because it was done before.”

The Power of Mindfulness, VD, p.109

THE REMOVAL OF ANGER

The true curative antidote for hate in all its forms is loving-kindness, assisted by patience, forbearance, and compassion. But unless the mind is well trained, when vehement wrath flares up, it will rarely be possible to replace it immediately by thoughts of loving-kindness. Nevertheless, a mental brake should be applied at once and the thoughts of anger curbed without delay. By such an act of firm restraint, time will be won to compose the mind for dealing with the situation thoughtfully and calmly. “

The Worn-Out Skin, VD, pp. 37–38

DETACHMENT

“*Within* there is no self that acts, and *outside* there is no self affected by the action!” If this is kept before the mind, then a beneficent feeling of inner distance from one’s so-called “own” actions will develop, and a growing detachment as to any success or failure, praise or blame, resulting from such action.

HBM, p. 53

ALL LIFE AS PRACTICE

Wherever circumstances allow one to attend mindfully and thoughtfully to any occurrence, big or small, one should relate it to the Four Noble Truths. In this manner, one will be able to come closer to the postulate that *life should become one with the practice and practice become full-blooded life*. Thus the world of common experience will become more and more “articulate” and evocative as to the eternal voice of the Dhamma.

HIM, p. 75

ATTENTION AND COMPREHENSION

Bare attention heightens the susceptibility and refines the sensitivity of the human mind; clear comprehension guides as well as strengthens the actively shaping and creative energies. Bare attention makes for the growth, preservation, and refinement of intuition—that indispensable source of inspiration and regeneration for the world of action and rational thought. Clear comprehension, on the other hand, as an active and activating force, works for making the mind a perfect instrument for its hard task of harmonious development and final liberation. It trains one, at the same time, for selfless work in the service of suffering humanity, by bestowing the keen eye of wisdom and the sure hand of skilfulness which are as necessary for that service as a warm heart.

HBM, p. 56

FREEDOM FROM TIME

Right mindfulness recovers for man the lost pearl of his freedom, snatching it from the jaws of the dragon Time. Right mindfulness cuts man loose from the fetters of the past, which he foolishly tries even to reinforce by looking back to it too frequently, with eyes of longing, resentment, or regret. Right mindfulness stops man from chaining himself, even now, through the imaginations of his fears and hopes, to anticipated events of the future. Thus right mindfulness restores to man a freedom that is to be found only in the present.

HBM, p. 41

THE END OF THE WORLD

The end of formations (Nibbāna) comes to be by the end of “forming,” that is, by the end of world-creating kammic activities. It is the “end of the world” and of suffering, which the Buddha proclaimed cannot be reached by walking, migrating, or transmigrating, but can be found within ourselves. That end of the world is heralded by each deliberate act of *keeping still, stopping, or pausing*.

The Power of Mindfulness, VD, p. 109

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

It is the hopeful message of the Buddha’s Third Noble Truth that we can step out of the weary round of vain effort and misery. If, despite our knowledge of the possibility of release, we keep walking on the treadmill of life, that is because of an age-old addiction hard to break, the deeply rooted habit of clinging to the notions of “I,” “mine,” and “self.” But here again there is the hopeful message in the Fourth Noble Truth with its Noble Eightfold Path, the therapy that can cure the addiction and gradually lead us to the final cessation of suffering. And all that is required for the therapy is again found in our own body and mind.

Kamma and its Fruit, VD, p. 317

A REFUGE FROM FEAR

Nothing that happens to us comes from an “outer” hostile world foreign to ourselves; everything is the outcome of our own mind and deeds. Because this knowledge frees us from fear, it is the first basis of equanimity. When in everything that befalls us we only meet ourselves, why should we fear? If, however, fear should arise, we know the refuge where it can be allayed: our good deeds. By taking this refuge, confidence and courage will grow within us—confidence in the protecting power of our good deeds done in the past; courage

to perform more good deeds right now, despite the discouraging hardships of our present life.

The Four Sublime States, VD, p. 259 ,

CROSSING THE OCEAN OF LIFE

To cross the ocean of life and reach “the other shore” safely, skill is needed in navigating its currents and cross-currents. In adapting oneself to those inner and outer currents, however, one must always be watchful. The currents can be powerful at times and one must know when it is necessary to resist them. Sometimes right effort has to be applied to avoid or overcome what is evil and to produce and preserve what is good. At other times it is wise to restrain excessive and impatient zeal and revert to a receptive attitude, allowing the processes of inner growth to mature at their own rate. By wisely directed adaptation we can learn to give full weight to both sides of every situation—to the duality in our own nature and in the objective circumstances we face. Only by confronting and understanding the two sides within one’s own experience can one master and finally transcend them.

The Worn-Out Skin, VD, p. 34

THE PEACEFUL WAY

One who has developed his mind by meditation lives in peace with himself and with the world. From him no harm or violence will issue. The peace and purity which he radiates will have an inspiring, uplifting power and will be a blessing to the world. He will be a positive factor in society, even if he lives in seclusion and silence.

Protection through Right Mindfulness, VD, p. 327

THE ROAD TO INSIGHT

Generalizing thought inclines to become impatient with a recurrent type, and after having it classified, soon finds it boring. Bare attention, however, being the key instrument of methodical insight, keeps to the particular. It follows keenly the rise and fall of successive physical and mental processes. If mindfulness remains alert, repetitions of type will, by their multiplication, exert not a reduced but an intensified impact on the mind. The three characteristics—impermanence, suffering, and voidness of self—inherent in the process observed, will stand out more and more clearly. They will appear in the light shed by the phenomena themselves, not in a borrowed light; not even a light borrowed from the Buddha. These physical and mental phenomena, in their “self-luminosity,” will then convey a growing sense of urgency to the meditator. Then, if all other conditions of inner maturity are fulfilled, the first direct vision of final liberation will dawn with the stream-winner’s indubitable knowledge: “Whatever has the nature of arising, has the nature of vanishing.”

The Power of Mindfulness, VD, p.115

THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS

To discern the three characteristics of existence will yield immense benefits, both in our daily life and in our spiritual striving. On the mundane level, the clear comprehension of impermanence, suffering, and non-self will bring a saner outlook on life. It will free us from unrealistic expectations, bestow a courageous acceptance of suffering and failure, and protect us against the lure of deluded assumptions and beliefs. In our quest for the

supramundane, the meditative experience of the three marks will loosen, and finally cut, the bonds binding us to an existence falsely imagined to be lasting, pleasurable, and substantive:
Seeing Things As They Are, VD, p. 292

EGOLESSNESS

The non-existence of a permanent identity is the crux of the whole teaching of the Buddha. This distinguishes it from all other religions or philosophical systems, which all uphold, in one way or another, some kind of belief in an “I” entity, in an individual soul or in a world soul. The insight into the truth of *anattā* is the great, unique achievement of the Buddha. It is only if one understands this teaching of “non-self” that one can understand the Dhamma.

The Way to Freedom from Suffering, VD, p. 7

EQUANIMITY AND COMPASSION

Compassion guards equanimity from falling into a cold indifference, and keeps it from indolent or selfish isolation. Until equanimity has reached perfection, compassion urges it to enter again and again the battle of the world, in order to be able to stand the test, by hardening and strengthening itself. *Equanimity* furnishes compassion with an even, unwavering courage and fearlessness, enabling it to face the awesome abyss of misery and despair which confront boundless compassion again and again. To the active side of compassion, equanimity is the calm and firm hand led by wisdom—indispensable to those who want to practise the difficult art of helping others.

The Four Sublime States, VD, pp. 260–61

PROTECTION OF SELF, PROTECTION OF OTHERS

Self-protection and protection of others correspond to the great twin virtues of Buddhism, wisdom and compassion. “I shall protect myself”—thus should we establish our mindfulness, and guided by it, devote ourselves to the practice of meditation, for the sake of our own liberation. “I shall protect others”—thus should we establish our mindfulness, and guided by it, regulate our conduct by patience, harmlessness, loving-kindness, and compassion, for the welfare and happiness of many.

Protection through Right Mindfulness, VD, pp. 327–28

PART FOUR

DOCUMENTS

1. A LEARNED SCHOLAR, A RELIGIOUS PRACTITIONER

The German Oriental Society (Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft) has on the 30th April 1978 elected Mr. Siegmund Feniger with his monastic name Nyanaponika Mahāthera to its Honorary Membership

In him the Society honours the excellent scholar of Theravada Buddhism, the translator of *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, *Sutta Nipāta*, and other canonical and post-canonical texts, as well as the author of numerous books and articles on the spirituality and the system of the Theravādins. Particularly through his book *Abhidhamma Studies*, and his translation of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and its commentary, the *Atthasālinī* (reproduced as manuscripts), he has made an essential contribution to an extending and deepening of our knowledge of the Buddhist Abhidhamma. Being a member of the Buddhist Order for over forty years, he combines, in a rare measure, scholarship and scientific exactitude with practical experience. To the Buddhologist and the scholar in the field of religions, his books on the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna have opened reliable access to the essence of this meditative training which is fundamental to Buddhist spirituality. He has also tried with success to adapt its propaedeutics to the conditions of modern life.

By electing him as an Honorary Member, the Society wanted to appreciate this combination of objective scholarship with religious practice, and at the same time to give cognizance to the fact that, in spite of injustice experienced, he did not allow his contact with German scholars to cease.

2. A FIRST-EVER DEGREE

Conferment of Honorary Doctorate by the Vice Chancellor, Ven. Dr. Kakkapalliye Anuruddha, at the First Convocation of the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka 16th December 1987

On this historic occasion of the first convocation of the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka, I rise in this august assembly to perform the pleasant function of presenting Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera to the Venerable Chancellor for the conferment of the first-ever honorary degree of this University.

The Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka was established in 1982 for the propagation of the Buddha Dhamma, the promotion of Pali studies in Sri Lanka and abroad, and the conducting of examinations in Buddhism and Pali. Of these objectives, the propagation of the Buddha Dhamma in Sri Lanka and abroad can be regarded as the chief one.

The conferment of degrees on a batch of graduates, both lay and cleric, at this convocation today is an indication of the success of our systematic programme of studies conducted during the past five years with the aim of producing personnel with the necessary knowledge of the doctrine, competency in language, and sound ethical conduct and mental discipline needed for the propagation of the Buddha Dhamma.

While we were thus engaged in producing personnel equipped with the necessary knowledge for the propagation of the Buddha Dhamma, Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera has been attempting, for nearly half a century, to achieve the same objective in a different manner. The University Council therefore decided, on the recommendation of the Board of

Studies, that this convocation is a fitting occasion to pay tribute to this Mahāthera in recognition of his yeoman service to the cause of Buddhism.

Venerable Chancellor, I therefore respectfully present to you Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera for the conferment, in absentia, of the degree of Doctor of Literature honoris causa.

3. AN ORNAMENT OF THE TEACHING

*Grant of Honorary Title by the Great Sangha Council of the Sri Lanka Amarapura Nikāya
30th August 1993*

The Great Sangha Council of the Sri Lanka Amarapura Nikāya, comprising 126 bhikkhus from 21 sub-sects, gathered at the Sri Dharmapalarama Vihāra in Mount Lavinia and conferred on Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera the honorary title “Amarapura Mahā Mahopādhyāya Sāsana Sobhana” (Great Mentor of the Amarapura Nikāya, Ornament of the Teaching) in recognition of the incomparable service he has rendered to the Buddha Sāsana through his books in German and English and his work in disseminating the Dhamma throughout the world while residing in Sri Lanka for over fifty years.

We announce with love for the Sāsana that Ven. Nyanaponika Mahāthera possessed of virtue and other qualities that adorn the Sangha, and honoured by the honorary title, should continue to work for the welfare of the entire Bhikkhu Sangha. It behoves the Bhikkhu Sangha and all good people, showing honour and respect to Amarapura Mahā Mahopādhyāya Sāsana Sobhana Nyanaponika Mahāthera to help him in all work connected with the Sāsana

This grant of honorary title was offered by His Excellency D.B. Wijetunga, President of Sri Lanka and Minister for Buddha Sāsana at an eminent assembly held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall on 30 August 1993.

4. THE NEED FOR THE DHAMMA TODAY

Speech by Ven. Nyanaponika at the opening of the BPS's new headquarters on 26th April 1985, with the then President of Sri Lanka, J.R. Jayewardene, as chief guest of honour

This occasion, the opening of our Society's new building by His Excellency the President, marks a new progressive stage in the activities of the Buddhist Publication Society, which was started 27 years ago from small beginnings. Throughout these years we have done our work in a quiet way, and this occasion is, in fact, our first public appearance.

The early start of our work, in 1958, proved to be timely, indeed. A keen interest in Buddhism was already rapidly growing in many countries, especially in the West. This led to the spread of our literature to 86 countries, from the most southern regions such as South Africa up to the high north, Alaska and Iceland. It was truly a surprise to us when demands for our Dhamma books reached us from quite unexpected corners of the globe, such as the Fiji Islands, Papua New Guinea, etc.

Our Society's growth found expression also in the size of our production. Up to 1984 our output totalled 2,700,000 books and booklets. Through the quantity and quality of our publications we have become, with the Pall Text Society, the world's major publisher of Theravada Buddhist literature. The start of our Society was timely also in another respect. To those who know how the Buddhist movement in the West developed, the need became evident to make Theravada Buddhism better known and appreciated in the West. Other schools of Buddhism had become very active in the West, and we hope that our literature has made a contribution towards the strengthening of the Theravada position. Our Wheel series has become widely known abroad, and through that, Sri Lanka too has become more

popular as a source of reliable Theravada literature. There is still much scope for expanding our activities and, by doing so, strengthening the impact of the Dhamma on receptive minds.

Seeing how our present world is so full of hostility and violence rooted in delusion, and how the Buddha's healing and liberating message is so badly needed, we feel greatly urged to make use of the existing opportunities to spread the Dhamma still more widely. But for doing so, we shall need more active helpers of dedication and intelligence. The lack of them has been a handicap in expanding our work.

The Buddha once said that the best of persons is the one who lives for his own true welfare, for the welfare of others, and for the welfare of the whole world. Let us all aspire to come closer and closer to that ideal!

May I make here another appeal to make the Dhamma a still stronger force in the life and thought of this country? I feel that more of our Buddhist brothers and sisters should cultivate the reading habit. In days of old, the Jātaka Pota, which was carefully and respectfully wrapped and kept, was read in the family circle. This good old habit should be revived and extended to the full range of Buddhist literature. Common reading once a week in the family circle will also have the beneficial effect of making family ties closer.

If the knowledge and practice of the Dhamma takes stronger roots in the home life, it will have a significant effect on reducing juvenile crime and the dangerously growing drug addiction among the young and not-so-young. These have now become serious problems in our country. It was through both compassion and wisdom that the Bodhisattva attained Perfect Buddhahood. If even in a modest way, we ourselves cultivate these twin virtues, compassion and wisdom, it will be of the greatest blessings for ourselves and society. After our country's present painful period of ethnic conflict has passed, it will be the time to heal the wounds by a genuine reconciliation. And for that again, the help which the Dhamma can give should not be neglected. May peace and harmony soon return to Sri Lanka!

5. LAST WISHES OF VEN. NYANAPONIKA

(Found in his Final Dispositions after his Death)

My thoughts of gratitude go:

To all my kind supporters and friends, for the help and encouragement given to me throughout my life as a monk. May their lives be happy and lead them closer to their aspiration and to the final attainment of Nibbāna!

To all at the Buddhist Publication Society for their dedicated cooperation. May the merit they have acquired by devotedly helping to give the gift of Dhamma to the world bring them happiness here and hereafter and be an aid to them on the path to deliverance and its attainment!

May the work of the Buddhist Publication Society continue and grow for a long time to come, and bestow the precious gift of the Dhamma on Sri Lanka and on many other lands!

May the Buddha Sāsana in its purity be preserved for long in a peaceful and prosperous Sri Lanka and may the inner strength of the Sāsana grow in this country, to which I feel a deep sense of gratitude.

With thoughts of mettā,
Nyanaponika Mahāthera

THE NYANAPONIKA DHAMMA DANA PROJECT

In late 1993 the Buddhist Publication Society decided to launch a Dhamma Dana Project in order to give our valuable books and booklets a wider distribution. This undertaking was in line with the original conception behind the founding of the BPS, which was to extend the gift of the Dhamma to the world as freely and as generously as possible. Following the death of Venerable Nyanaponika, the BPS's Board of Management elected to rename the Project after him, one who so abundantly embodied the spirit of Dhamma Dana. Under the Project, the BPS distributes, free of charge, between 50 and 150 copies of each new major book publication to selected Buddhist centres, viharas, and libraries around the world, inclusive of Sri Lanka. We also send a substantial portion of our Wheels, both new titles and reprints, to various centres for free distribution among their members.

The BPS has allocated a fixed portion of our financial resources to this Project, with the intention of using the interest generated to facilitate the free dispatch of books. We cordially invite our friends and well-wishers to participate in this meritorious undertaking by making donations towards the Dhamma Dana Project. Such donations will help us to extend the range of our distribution scheme. If you would like to contribute towards this free distribution of Dhamma books, please send whatever amount you wish to the address given, ear-marked "Nyanaponika Dhamma Dana Project." We particularly welcome grants to the BPS under the Last Will, which will give you the assurance that your precious legacy is being used for the noblest purpose of all: the spread of the Dhamma.

Hony. Secretary

Buddhist Publication Society P.O. Box 61
54, Sangharaja Mawatha Kandy, Sri Lanka

Note: All remittances to the BPS should be made payable to: Buddhist Publication Society. Please mark all cheques, money orders, or bank drafts: A/C Payee Only, Commercial Bank of Ceylon. Ltd., Kandy. Our account number for direct transfers is 01 0006580 01 for local remittances; 02 0006580 01 for remittances from abroad. Registration of letters containing remittances is recommended for extra security.

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The BPS is an approved charity dedicated to making known the Teaching of the Buddha, which has a vital message for all people.

Founded in 1958, the BPS has published a wide variety of books and booklets covering a great range of topics. Its publications include accurate annotated translations of the Buddha's discourses, standard reference works, as well as original contemporary expositions of Buddhist thought and practice. These works present Buddhism as it truly is—a dynamic force which has influenced receptive minds for the past 2500 years and is still as relevant today as it was when it first arose.

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