

Attaining Nirvana

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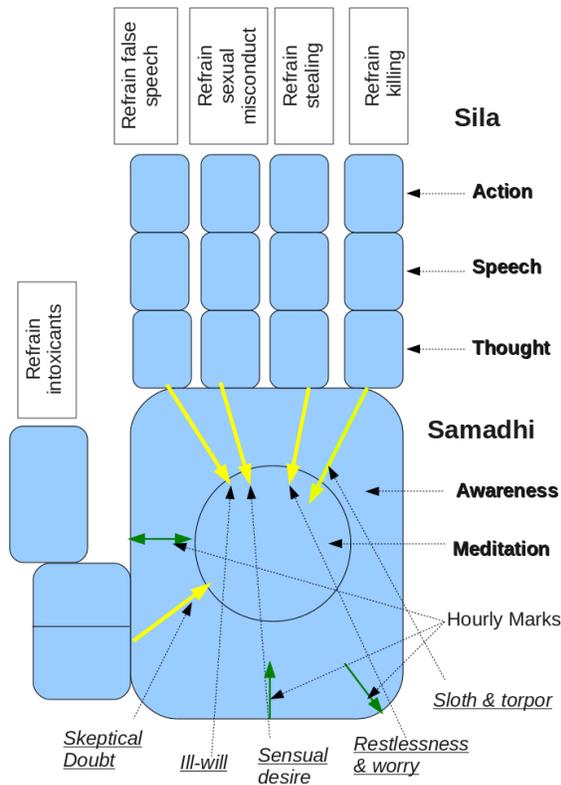
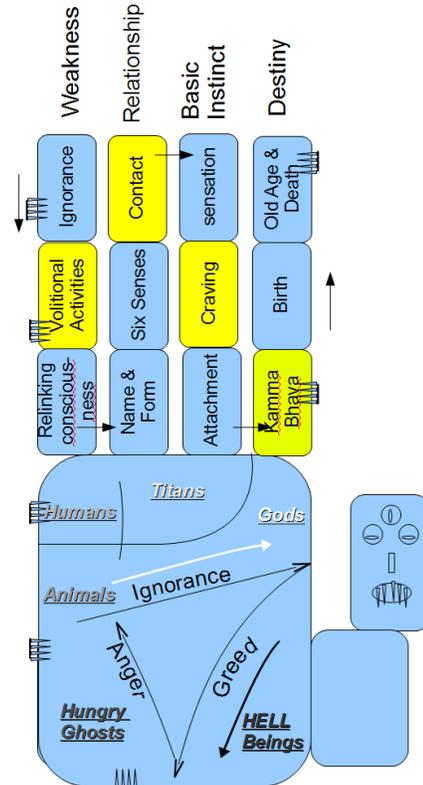


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The authors are neither Buddhist monks nor any Buddhist philosophers. They wrote what they found helpful in their practice of Buddhism. This site is under development and contents may change frequently. The contents and views in this site are of authors themselves. Any comments to posts and pages are personal views of people who post the comments.

Author's Note

I've been looking for you, Neo. I don't know if you're ready to see what I want to show you, but unfortunately you and I have run out of time.

–Morpheus

I, Milind Lokde and my friend, Bhushan Gawai have been devising a way to remember the Buddhist teachings so that they can be practiced easily by everyone. We made it into a book so that everyone can benefit from our experience of practicing Buddhism.

This book is intended for both Buddhist and non-Buddhists. The motivation behind writing this book is that being a Buddhist we knew a lot about Buddhism and Buddha, but when it came to practicing Buddhism in daily life, it became very difficult. Sometimes there was no following the five precepts, no prayers and no meditation at all. Buddhism is a way of life and not a religion unlike other religions. Unless you follow the path, unless you practice Buddhism, there is no Buddhism.

We have been trying to practice Buddhism in daily life since last 3-4 years and we found it very difficult to do so. At times we were practicing meditation and discussing it and at times debating Buddhist philosophy. At times we felt we were going nowhere. Then we decided to follow only what is important and can be done easily, and also help us achieve the goal of attaining Nirvana.

We have tried to present all the concepts that are correct as per our knowledge and understanding and experience as Buddhist practitioners. Everything in this book is purely Buddhist teachings and our addition is only the practicing part of the teachings.

Though this book is titled attaining Nirvana, we have made all efforts to make each step of the process of attaining Nirvana fruitful and helpful to everyone.

Part -I - Practice

The first part of this book/site is practice. This part covers the physical activities or actions that should or should not be done in order to attain Nirvana.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Hey, it just sounds to me like you need to unplug, man.

–Choi

This book “Attaining Nirvana” is about Nirvana or complete eradication of suffering of living beings, that Buddha gained more than 2500 years ago. Buddha taught the path to eradication of suffering or the path to Nirvana following which many people have gained Nirvana over these years. Even now and in future too anybody can attain Nirvana by following Buddha’s teachings or Dhamma.

Though there are many books on Buddhism, there are very few books referring to any possibility of attaining nirvana and still less in this very life time. Buddha’s teachings are directed towards Nirvana – complete eradication of sufferings. Many monks have attained Nirvana to become Arahant in a single lifetime by following Buddha’s teachings. We have tried to include in this book only those teachings that are relevant to attaining Nirvana and can be easily practiced by any layman. Other teaching may be added as a separate part in future if needed.

Some Buddhist concepts are so simple that even an uneducated can understand, while some are complex (not because it is itself complex, but because our mind refuse to accept some of the concepts.) enough even for educated to grasp easily. There are lots of good books on Buddhism covering every aspects of Buddhism and a lot of them are for free distribution. Readers are advised to read other books on Buddhism too, to better grasp the concepts.

This book is covered in three parts. Part I – Practice, Part II – Insight and Part III – Additional Aid.

Part I is the basic required teachings which is necessary and essential to attain Nirvana. It has 4 chapters dealing with the basic essential teachings required for attaining Nirvana and a chapter on how the teachings can be followed by a layman in daily life. In fact this part deals with the Four Noble Truth for eradicating Suffering and essential concepts to support the Four Noble Truth. This is also the practicing part of attaining Nirvana.

Part II is Insight which is essential, but not readily grasped by our mind. This also makes Buddhism different from other philosophies in the world. This is the understanding part of attaining Nirvana. It deals with concepts that make attaining Nirvana easier and also make it more clear what nirvana actually is and why it is so important to attain Nirvana and eradicate our suffering. This Part has 3 chapters, Karma, Rebirth and Dependent Origination.

Part III is Additional aid, this chapter will help you understand Nirvana better, clear your doubts, give motivation and also help you check your development progress. Also this part is the product of the authors’ imagination and should not be confused as Buddha’s teachings. This is also the reason why these chapters are kept separate.

The hand charts in this book are also the product of the authors’ imagination and does not exist anywhere in any other Buddhist texts or references. The charts are for remembering the Buddha’s teachings and to help in practising Buddhism.

Chapter 2: What is Nirvana?

It's the question that drives us, Neo. It's the question that brought you here. You know the question just as I did.

–Trinity

Nirvana in simple words is freedom from suffering of life. But Nirvana cannot be understood without attaining it, just like a person who has not tasted a strawberry can not be explained how it really tastes. But we can compare it with other things in world that we know to understand what it must be like. Thus by the end of this book you will gain good understanding of what Nirvana is. For the time being Nirvana is -

For Layman:

Nirvana is the state of being perfect, being free from greed, anger and ignorance and all defilements of our mind. The person who has attained Nirvana does no action, speech or thought that will harm others or will cause any bad reaction in future in anyway. He has no desires that will cause greed, jealousy and anger to be arisen. Thus he is free from suffering, free from fear, worry and tension. Thus, he does not suffer any worldly pain.

For Philosopher:

It means freedom from cycle of birth and death. There will be no further birth after attaining Nirvana and no further suffering. The person may still have to go through illness, old age and death, which is the consequence of birth in present life. There is no suffering of mind, but only of body as a result of wear and tear of body and limited lifespan of physical body.

For Buddhist:

On attaining nirvana, a person is free from the three root cause of suffering and understands the true nature of all things. Thus there is no further attachment, no further desires that will lead him to further sufferings. Thus, the person attaining Nirvana has perfected himself. Nirvana also means freedom from the cycle of Samsara or cycle of birth & death & suffering. On death, the body is disintegrated into its component parts that of earth, water, fire and air. The mind or consciousness no longer exists as there is no further desires and karma left to form into another life for rebirth.

Why do we need to attain Nirvana? Nirvana means freedom from suffering as a human being/living being. But, why do we suffer? We suffer due to our deeds also called karma or action which have bad reaction/effects. So if we are able to reduce our bad deeds/karma/action we will suffer less to that extent. If we are able to completely remove our defilement we will stop suffering altogether. This is basically the aim of Nirvana. But Nirvana is much more than just eradicating our defilements, it is eradicating defilements through wisdom, through knowledge and understanding of true nature of this world. But don't we know the true nature of this world even when we are so advanced in science and technology?

How do we attain Nirvana? This book is all about attaining Nirvana and we aim to make it simple. There are few things we need to know to attain Nirvana which are all covered in all the chapters ahead.

Buddha after attaining Nirvana or Enlightenment (found the path to eradicate sufferings), taught the

path to his disciples and all people so that they can too, like him eradicate their suffering and attain Nirvana. Many people at his time and after him attained Nirvana following the path or teachings.

- Buddha's teachings or the path is referred as the Dhamma.
- The community of monks or Buddhist practitioners is referred as the Sangha.
- All those who attained Nirvana after Buddha following his teachings are referred as Arahats.
- Those who avoid attaining Nirvana even though they can attain it, so that all people can benefit from their teachings and knowledge are referred as Bodhisattva'.

Chapter 3: Basics & Four Noble Truth

Do not try and bend the spoon. That's impossible. Instead only try to realize the truth.

–Spoon Boy

This chapter will give you the basic information you need to know to achieve Nirvana or to lead a life free from suffering. This chapter is also the base for the rest of the book. Actually Four Noble Truths in the title of this chapter is the base of teachings of the Buddha.

The Four Noble Truths

Four Noble Truths is the basic teaching of Buddhism. Also this basic teaching is enough for a person to attain Nirvana. Buddha found the path to eradication of suffering. Following the path one can attain Nirvana and eradicate his sufferings. So we must first know what is suffering (This is the first noble truth). Then we must know the cause of suffering (the second noble truth) so that it can be eradicated. When we know the cause of suffering, how the suffering comes to an end (the third noble truth). When we know how the suffering comes to an end, we need to know what we need to do to eradicate our sufferings (the fourth noble truth).

1. Dukkha (Suffering): Dukkha or Suffering is the First of the Noble Truth. Also Buddha's teachings revolve around suffering and accepting it as reality, as a truth, and eradicating it with knowledge and understanding. So what exactly is suffering? Suffering is, not getting what one wants. Suffering is, getting rid of what one doesn't want. Suffering is, fear of not being with our loved ones. Suffering is illness, old age and death.

As suffering forms the base of the Four Noble Truth and Buddhism, Buddhism is often thought as a pessimistic religion. We can compare suffering as disease. Just like knowing the disease is not pessimistic but realistic as it will help us diagnose the disease right and help us get cured soon. Similarly knowing that suffering exists and knowing its nature we will be better able to eradicate our suffering.

2. Cause of Dukkha (Suffering): Desire/attachment is the root cause of suffering. Desire to get wealth, get power, get love, get peace, get rid of disease and pain, get rid of poverty, get everything that we want and get rid of everything that we do not want. This desire causes in our mind Ignorance, lust (Greed) and anger – the base defilements of our minds that are cause of our suffering.

3. Cessation of Dukkha (Suffering): With the cessation of desire, the cause of suffering, the suffering also comes to an end. This is the Third Noble truth.

4. Path to Cessation of Suffering: By following the Noble Eight Fold path Dukkha comes to an end. The Eight Fold Path is grouped into three – *Sila* (Morality), *Samadhi* (Concentration), *Panna* (Wisdom).

Noble Eight Fold Path

Sila (Morality)

1. Right Action
2. Right Speech

3. Right Livelihood

Samadhi (Concentration)

4. Right Effort

5. Right Awareness

6. Right Meditation

Panna (Wisdom)

7. Right View

8. Right Resolve

Universal Characteristics of everything conditional:

Three universal truth: We have seen what is four noble truth. While the four noble truth gives us not just hope for the end of our sufferings, but also shows the path which can be followed to end the sufferings, the 3-universal truths is the only thing, the knowledge of which leads to end of suffering and to Nirvana. To really grasp the universal truths we need to understand and follow the four noble truths. So what are the three universal truths?

- Anicca (impermanence): All things in this world is impermanent.
- Anatta (No soul or substantialness): There is no permanent soul or substantialness in anything material or immaterial.
- Dukkha (Suffering): There is dukkha in attaching to everything that is conditioned by mind.

Anicca: Anicca in english means impermanence. This is the first universal truth. Everything that has a beginning comes to an end. In this context everything is impermanent. Everyone knows that. Really? Do we really recognize that our friends, neighbors, relatives, family and we ourselves are impermanent? Do we recognize that our pen, books, dress, car, house, etc are impermanent when we interact with them? When we all know that our earth, moon, sun including our solar system are impermanent and have a finite life span, why do we all fight for petty impermanent things on earth? Wait! There' more. Do you know that your thoughts, feelings, sensations, emotions, are impermanent too!

Anatta: Anatta means without self or without soul. It is a popular misconception that there exists a permanent soul within us that remains with us from our birth till death, and for those who believe, after death gets transferred to be reborn as another life. Instead, what we call soul is a continuous link of our ever changing memories or consciousness that is attached to our ever changing physical body. Let us experience it. Are you the same person you were 10yrs ago either physically or mentally? Are you the same person you were 5 yrs ago? Are you the same person you were last week? Are you the same person you were yesterday? Are you the same person you were 10 minutes before? The answer is obvious. No. Why? Because you have changed physically during this time. There has been a lot of biological changes inside you and the changes are continuous. This apart your likes and dislikes, your values, your thoughts, your personality, your knowledge, everything has changed. So how can we call ourselves the same person we were since childhood. How can we have a permanent soul, if it keeps changing so much? The point is, there exists no permanent soul, there is no self, there is no I, no me, no us, no them. It is just a name or identity we use for communication and identification purpose. It's the duality of name and form that gives us the impression of permanent soul or self. We have been carrying this false concept all our life. What we call self or I is physical and mental link at a point in time. This

has to be realized. This is Anatta.

Dukkha: Dukkha is one of the three universal truths. It is common to all living beings and hence Buddha's teachings are applicable to all living beings of all world systems (discussed later) alike. We have already seen what is dukkha or suffering. We have seen dukkha as suffering, as not getting what one wants, getting rid of what one doesn't want, not being with our loved ones, illness, old age and death.

Now we see Dukkha as unsatisfactoriness. Dukkha or suffering or unsatisfactoriness which arises due our wrong understanding of Anicca and Anatta and Dukkha itself. We see impermanent as permanent and get attached to it, which causes Dukkha. We see Anatta or not self as Self and attach to things as my or mine or ours or theirs, this causes suffering. We do not realize Dukkha or suffering or unsatisfactoriness as Dukkha or suffering or unsatisfactoriness, which also causes Dukkha.

If each of our thought, speech and action is based on the realization of these three universal truth then there will be no further desire, no further defilements, thus leading us to our goal of Nirvana.

Five Precepts (*Panchshila*):

Morality is an important base for attaining Nirvana as mentioned above in Noble Eight Fold Path. These five precepts or *panchsila* provides an important and simple guideline for laymen about morality.

1. Abstaining from harming or killing living beings.
2. Abstaining from stealing or taking what is not given.
3. Abstaining from sexual misconduct.
4. Abstaining false speech, harsh speech, slandering and vain talk.
5. Abstaining from taking intoxicants. (Intoxicant is anything that affects the normal functioning of mind).

There are three additional precepts followed by monks and in general not followed by laymen:

6. Abstaining from listening to music and other entertainment which affects our presence of mind.
7. Abstaining from taking high and cushioned seat which makes us lethargic.
8. Eating once a day but not after sunset, to maintain control on our greed.

Chapter 4: Noble Eight Fold Path

You have been down there, Neo. You know that road. You know exactly where it ends. And I know that's not where you want to be...

–Trinity

Noble Eight Fold Path

Sila (Morality)

1. Right Action
2. Right Speech
3. Right Livelihood

Samadhi (Concentration)

1. Right Effort
2. Right Awareness
3. Right Meditation

Panna (Wisdom)

1. Right Understanding
2. Right Thought

1. Right speech : what is right speech? Right speech is not speaking lies; right speech is avoiding idle talk or gossip; right speech is not slandering; right speech is avoiding harsh speech; thus anything spoken that is morally correct and not offending anyone is right speech.

2. Right action : what are right actions? They are the panchshila or five precepts: avoid harming living beings; avoiding taking what is not given or avoid stealing; avoiding sexual misconduct; avoiding false speech; avoiding intoxicants.

3. Right livelihood: earnings from noble source only i.e. Not earning through killing, stealing or cheating, or from any other immoral source. Right livelihood is necessary as it affects our daily life and can hinder our efforts at right speech and action. Also it is very difficult for salespeople to sell without some lies and some businesses cannot survive if shortcomings of their product or services are made public. Choose your livelihood wisely.

4. Right effort: putting right amount of effort to achieve nirvana. Very little effort will take us nowhere and too much effort can lead to disappointment and lack of faith in achieving nirvana.

- Also right effort is avoiding bad karma.
- Right effort is preventing further bad karma from arising.
- Right effort is developing good karma.
- Right effort is maintaining good karma that has arisen.

5. Right awareness: what is right awareness? What are we not aware of? Right awareness is being always aware of what we are doing. Basically it is avoiding day dreaming. But it is more than that. Usually while walking, sitting, driving and all the time we are awake, we are not aware what we are doing, how we are walking, sitting, speaking, etc.

But why is awareness so necessary? It is mostly due to not being aware that we do evil karma. Also it is because of no awareness that we do karma and become aware only after we have done it. Awareness is also necessary to follow the 8-fold path and hence also necessary to achieve nirvana.

6. Right meditation or concentration: It is very difficult to meditate. Is meditation really necessary to achieve nirvana? We do not have time to meditate for long period. We also cannot meditate for long period as our daily life doesn't give us enough time to practice such meditation.

Actually awareness is a type of meditation. It can and should be enough to replace the need for meditation. But awareness cannot give us finer control of our mind. Only meditation gives us higher level of awareness of working of our mind also known as meditative states or jhanas. Meditation makes us aware of what, when and how our sensations transform into thought and thought into action. Thus meditation makes us aware of our karma which is the base for nirvana.

Most people doubt the effectiveness of meditation as the results are not as dramatic as they expect. Only long periods of meditation has any accountable effect. Then is it that laymen cannot really be benefited with little meditation every day? Actually everyone can be benefited from meditation, only that the benefits of meditation can be seen only through awareness in regular life. As I have already said awareness is a type of meditation and not just that, without awareness meditation is of very little use. This is the reason why people cannot see the effect of meditation.

But like meditation, awareness is also difficult, but can be mastered with determination and discipline.

7. Right understanding: right understanding is

i. Four noble truth – that there is dukkha, that desire is the root cause of suffering, that there is cessation of suffering and suffering can be conquered by following the 8-fold path.

ii. Dependent origination

iii. Karma

8. Right thought: I have intentionally interpreted this for our thoughts as a “shila” or morality to complete the chart and also to emphasize the importance of our thoughts in our karma. But it is now time to explain the actual meaning of right thought.

Right thought is also interpreted as right view and also right vision. Right view is:

- There is rebirth
- That our karma affects our future life.
- That nirvana can be achieved by anyone who follows the path.
- That we are ourselves responsible for our future and it does not depend on an external being.
- That attaching to everything impermanent causes dukkha.
- That there is dukkha and we must realize dukkha as it is.
- That there is no permanent soul and there is no substance in identity.

Chapter 5: Meditation

You have to let it all go, Neo, fear, doubt, and disbelief. Free your mind.

–Morpheus

We have dedicated a separate chapter to meditation as a guide to how and what of meditation techniques recommended by Buddha. Readers are recommended to read material from other sources for correct method of meditation. There are more than 40 types of *Samatha* (Concentration) meditation each with different goals and suited to different types of people.

1. *Loving Kindness (Metta) Meditation*: This meditation is done to reduce our anger and develop loving kindness towards all beings. Thus this meditation reduces hatred and generates love in us. Anger and hatred is one of the three root cause of suffering.
2. *Mindfulness of body*: Easy to break bad habits and also helps in improving awareness in daily life. We are aware of whether our hands are relaxed, the position of our head, whether we are leaning forward or backward, whether we are very relaxed or strained.
3. *Mindfulness of breathing*: Very simple steps and easy to learn and practice. We are mindful of our breath as it comes in and also as it goes out.
4. *Mindfulness of sensations*: We now when a sensation has arisen which helps in controlling our thoughts that arise as an effect of sensation. Whether the sensation is good or bad or neither good nor bad, without giving any reaction and just observing it with calm mind.
5. *Mindfulness of thought*: We are aware when a thought has arisen and when it has ceased and thus controlling it on time and also leading to controlling our actions based on these thoughts.
6. *Mindfulness of thought objects*: We now when a thought has arisen, how it continues and how it then ceases. How one thought gives rise to another thought. How the arisen thought leads us to actions.

Five hindrances in meditation

1. Skeptical doubt
2. Ill-will
3. Sensual Pleasures
4. Restlessness and Worry
5. Sloth and Torpor (Laziness)

Chapter 6: How to Practice

The aim of the chart is to be aware of our deeds/karma as it is being done. In our daily life we are not aware whether what we have done is good or bad karma. With the help of this chart we can see all the karma that we have done after it has been done, like taking intoxicant, speaking lies, etc. After practicing it for some time, maybe we will not be able to control our karma, but at least we will be aware of our actions as they are being done. Awareness that we should change is important before we can change ourselves.

Refer fig.1: For practicing this figure is represented on the left palm, so that we can easily make markings on it with our right hand. (Left handed people can use this figure on right hand.) For attaining Nirvana, Buddha taught the Eight Fold Path, which is as under:

- *Sila*: 1) Right Speech 2) Right Action 3) Right Livelihood
- *Samadhi*: 4) Right Effort 5) Right Awareness 6) Right Meditation
- *Panna*: 7) Right Thought 8) Right Understanding

With the help of the figure we can follow *Sila* and *Samadhi* aspects of attaining Nirvana. While Panna is left for the Second part of this Book, which will complete all aspects of attaining Nirvana.

The representations are as follows (Kindly re-read the details of each representation in previous chapters. Also see the figure as you read the rest of this chapter) :

- The five fingers represent the five precepts (Ch.2).

1) The little finger (weaker finger): Represents – and reminds us from abstaining from killing or harming living beings.

2) The Ring finger (With costly ring on it): Represents – and reminds us from abstaining from stealing or taking what is not given.

3) The (notorious) Middle finger: Represents – and reminds us from abstaining from sexual misconduct.

4) The index finger (we use to ask someone to be quiet): Represents – and reminds us from abstaining from speaking lies, or speaking ill of others.

5) The thumb (Representing drink in Thumbs Up position): Represents – and reminds us from abstaining from taking any intoxicants that affects the normal functioning of our mind.

Three other precepts not represented are followed by monks (We should try these in addition to above precepts at least once in a week or fasting days.)

6) Abstaining from listening to music and other entertainment which affects our presence of mind.

7) Abstaining from taking high and cushioned seat which makes us lethargic.

8) Eating once a day but not after sunset, to maintain control on our greed.

- The three phalanges of each finger represent from innermost phalanges, the five precepts or Morality (*Sila*). As karma or intentional actions (discussed in next Part of this Book) are performed in thought, speech and action, the five precepts are divided and represented into three by the phalanges. This is so that we do not neglect or give less importance to karma performed in either thought, speech or action. Also as it is very difficult to change our source of livelihood

if it has already been chosen or we had no choice, it becomes important that we follow the precepts in thought, speech and action so we have control of our mind and make our livelihood better. Those who have yet to choose their livelihood should choose it wisely as it affects our whole life, our minds and our practice.

- The outer part of the palm connected to the fingers is used to mark our awareness in daily life. The marks are made from outside to inside. The markings are done like hour mark on a clock. For each hour that we are aware we make a mark indicating we were aware at that time of the day. Also as we cannot properly represent a 24hr clock, we represent the marks with arrows pointing inwards as day for that hour and the same arrow pointing outwards as night and the mark having arrows at both ends as being aware for that hour both during day and night.
- The circle in the center of palm shown in the figure is used to mark our meditation practice. A smaller circle is drawn for small period of meditation and large circle for longer period of meditation. Here again we draw another concentric circle for meditation done more than once during a day.
- The long and bold arrows shown pointing from each finger towards center where we mark meditation is used to indicate the five hindrances that affect our meditation practice. These are
 - Sloth & Torpor (Laziness): This line is drawn from the little finger – the weaker finger, which does very little work than the other fingers.
 - Restlessness & Worry : This line is drawn from the ring finger, the diamond/golden ring in your finger giving you the cause for worry and restlessness.
 - Sensual pleasure: This line is drawn from the middle finger, this is again the notorious middle finger associated with sensual pleasure.
 - Ill-will: This line is drawn from the index finger, pointing to others, thinking evil of others.
 - Skeptical doubt: This line is drawn from the thumb. The thumb in up direction says ‘go ahead’ and the same in down direction says ‘it sucks’.

Part - II Insight

This part focuses more on deeper understanding of Buddhist concepts and an intellectual approach to Nirvana.

Chapter 7: Dependent Origination

What is Dependent Origination? Why is it so important?

On the day Buddha attained Nirvana, during his meditation, he saw the true nature of all things and why people are unhappy. He understood the dependent origination. One thing leads to other and it forms a cycle which is difficult to break without proper understanding. Buddha understood why some people are happy and some are unhappy and are suffering, what he found out after years of effort, he made it available to everyone to benefit. He found the nature of all things, the dependent origination and the path to Nirvana. Now it is on each of us to put in effort and be free from suffering.

The Dependant Origination:

1. Ignorance – It is the root cause of suffering
2. Volitional Activities – With Ignorance arises Volitional Activities
3. Relinking Consciousness – With Volitional Activities arises Relinking Consciousness
4. Name and Form – With Relinking Consciousness arises Name and Form duality
5. Six Senses – Name and Form is accompanied by the Six Senses of Sight, Hearing, Taste, Touch, Smell and the Mind emulates all other five senses.
6. Contact – With Six Senses arises contact with their respective Sense objects that of Sight Object, Sound, Taste object, touch object, smell object and mental objects
7. Sensation – With contact arises sensation
8. Craving – With sensation arises craving
9. Attachment – With craving arises attachment
10. Kamma – Bhava – With attachment arises Kamma – Bhava, our reactions
11. Birth – With Kamma – Bhava (our reactions) arises birth or becoming
12. Old Age and Death – With birth arises Old Age and Death and all other related sufferings

There are two charts here. One is the original and lively pictorial chart Illustration.2, and the other, Illustration.3, is the same chart mapped on the palm for better memorization and practice in daily life. Readers here have a choice to prefer the first chart or the second chart or both for different place and time. For being constantly aware of the dependent origination, we have had it adapted to be plotted on our Right Palm where we do not have to make any changes.

This chart shows how some people make their life miserable with their wrong thoughts, speech and action and how some people enjoy good life after freeing themselves of the root causes of suffering (Ignorance, greed and anger). It also shows the cause and effect relationship that makes our future good or bad and also how we can break the chain of cause and effect to become free of suffering and attain Nirvana.

Starting from the center of the palm,

1. The three root causes of suffering ignorance, greed and anger depicted by the edges of inner triangle

of the palm.

2. Beings sliding down into life of suffering (marked by the dark arrow pointing down adjacent to line of greed in the picture) and Beings climbing up (Marked by a white arrow adjacent to edge of ignorance).
3. The Six worlds (marked on the mounts of the palm) of that of Human, Titans or *asuras*, Gods, Animals, Hungry Ghosts and Hell beings.
4. The Four fingers with their three phalanges each shows the twelve links of cause and effect relationships.
5. The thumb which has control of all activities of the palm represents the Mara – The God of Death who does not let the activities stop.
6. The term Dependent Origination is also used for the 12 links forming a cycle of life & death or of each karma and its result. Each link is a cause for next link. We can stop the wheel/break the cycle by breaking any one of the 12 links. Thus the simplest way to attain Nirvana is breaking the cycle of karma. And breaking the cycle is breaking just one link. It is very easy, but to do that we need a lot of discipline and also right understanding. That brings us back to following the 8 fold path. This book will guide you through the process of freeing you from the cycle of karma. Of the 12 links we can observe 4 links being broken with each of the link being broken as we progress. Refer fig. 1 & 3. First fig shows the eight fold path on the palm, with action, speech, thought, awareness and concentration marked from top to bottom. Compare this with the 12 links in fig. 3. As soon as you start observing your actions and speech you start to break the cycle at the kamma-bhava (actions) link on index finger. When you observe your thoughts you break the cycle at craving link on middle finger as craving is followed by a flood of thoughts. With awareness you break the contact link on tip of ring finger as you are aware when there is any sense contact. You will observe how finer control is gained as you progress. With meditation you get still finer control of your karma on the little finger as your Volitional Activities are under control. Finally when you move towards your right hand and with insight you completely eradicate ignorance and you become finally free from the cycle of karma/wheel of life and move towards achieving Nirvana.

Chapter 8: Karma

What is Karma?

Karma or *kamma* in simple sense is any action that can have a good or bad future implications/effects.

But not all actions cause effects/implications in future. These are non-volitional kammās(actions). Those actions that does not involve will or desire, like eating, drinking water, answering call of nature, walking, sleeping, etc. Thus only actions that involve will/desire/volition forms a karma. Thus karma has a cause and effect relationship with our good or bad future, karma being the cause and our good or bad future being its result. This cause and effect relationship is also called as the Law of Kamma. This law also explains why some people suffer while some don't, why some are poor and some are rich.

Let us make some points clear about karma:

1. Karma is a natural law and no one enforces this law. It is similar to any other natural laws like gravitation, Newton's laws of motion, etc.
2. Kamma cannot be transferred
3. It does not end with end of present life.
4. Depending on cause, it can be classified into good karma, evil or bad karma and neither good nor bad karma.
5. Not everything that happens to us can be attributed to karma.
6. Depending on the how the karma bears fruit it is classified as Weighty (serious karma – good or bad) proximate (karma at time of death – which determines our next birth), habitual and reserve (other than all three).
7. Depending on time it bears fruit: present life, next life and future lives.
8. Depending on function it can be classified into: reproductive (that which bears result), supportive (they do not bear result but support the result of other karma), obstructive (they reduce the effect of other karma) and destructive (they nullify the effect/result of other karma).

Chapter 9: Rebirth

Rebirth is a very important doctrine in Buddhism. Rebirth is transfer of life from one physical body to another. Concept of Rebirth builds on the concept of Karma discussed in previous chapter. How and where birth takes place depends on one's karma. The cycle of karma and its result forms the basis for the cycle of birth and death.

Let us first discuss what is rebirth in Buddhism.

An important concept relating to rebirth as per Buddhism is the concept of anatta or 'no soul'. Normally soul is supposed to a permanent entity residing in the body of a living being that differentiates it from non-living things. When a living being dies that soul leaves the body and finds another body to be reborn as another living being.

But as per Buddhism there exists no such permanent entity as soul. There is just a continuation of consciousness.

For those who believe:

We can attain nirvana in next life. Whatever we practice in this life we will continue from the same state. Thus our efforts do not go waste. Our karma decides where and how we will be born and the consequences we will face in this and future life.

For those who do not believe:

Rebirth is in the form of continuous change in our body and mind. Thus we are continuously born and reborn. Thus, the consequence of our karma now have to be faced in our near or distant future either physically or mental tensions and pressure.

Buddha refuted following doctrines as not true and will not lead to human development:

1. One of nihilism that says that there is no birth after this birth. Thus there is no future opportunity to do good or rectify our bad karma.
2. One of fatalism where one's future is predetermined and there is no role of our will and no way to rectify our future.
3. Where one's future is determined by an act of external agent.

When we speak of Rebirth in Buddhism, we must give reference to the three Universal truths relating to existence:

1. Dukkha
2. Anatta
3. Anitya

Dukkha (discussed in chapter 2 under Four Noble Truths) is also translated as unsatisfactoriness. This unsatisfactoriness of our life is what gives rise to our Karma, which in turn is the cause for continuation of our life. Until our karma are exhausted life continues.

Anatta is the concept of no soul or no self. As discussed earlier, there is no such thing as a permanent soul that is transferred from one body to another. Instead it is a continuation of our consciousness. This continuation of consciousness is not only on rebirth but it happens all the time for all living beings. From birth till death we are continuously changing both physically and mentally. Our thoughts, values,

tastes, circumstances all change continuously. But there is a link between the changes our awareness, our memories, our link to the changing physically body and mind. This link of awareness and memories associated with life is what we call consciousness. As the link of consciousness exists from birth till death, the same continues even after death to the new body to form what we call rebirth.

Part - III Additional Aid

This part is our addition to the path of attaining Nirvana. This part uses analogy, self-help and a different view to Buddhism to gain more understanding Nirvana and giving confidence for achieving Nirvana.

Chapter 10: Graduation System

What is the graduation System? Why was it needed?

We found after 4 years of practising Buddhism, that we were unable to judge the progress we made in these years. We found our education system very effective in telling our progress and also motivating us for further progress.

The graduation System that we devised to judge our progress is similar to our educational system. This will help us to measure our progress and also motivate us. But there is a difference. Here we will have to judge our progress for ourselves as no one else can know what progress we have made. This chapter provides us the necessary progress guidelines.

Practice

Level 1(1 yr): You are aware of all your actions and are able to avoid breaking any of the precepts in action.

Level 2(2 yr): You are aware of your speech in addition to your actions and are able to avoid breaking any of the precepts in action and speech.

Level 3(3 yr): You have achieved above level and you are aware of all your thoughts and are able to avoid breaking any of the precepts in thoughts.

Level 4(4 yr): You are aware of all your thoughts, speech and actions through the day and are able to avoid breaking any of the precepts in action, speech and thought. You maintain awareness all the time.

Level 5(5 yr): You have achieved above levels and are able to meditate properly and for at-least 1 hour per day for at least 4 days per week. You now understand the importance, benefits and procedure for meditation.

Insight

Level 6(6 yr): You have achieved above levels and are free from greed, anger and ignorance. Ignorance in the sense that you now that all things in this universe are impermanent, that there is no permanent entity as soul and there is dukkha in attaching to things conditioned by impermanence and concept of permanent soul

Level 7(7 yr): You have achieved above levels. You understand the cycle of karma better. You understand karma better, i.e. you are aware my such and such an action will bear good or bad or no future implications.

Level 8(8 yr): You have achieved the above levels. You understand the different world systems, that of humans, gods, demons, hell, animals and hungry ghosts. You know what kind of action brings one to a particular world system. You understand the impermanent nature of all the world systems. You can empathize with the sufferings of each world system. You are thus motivated to grow above these world systems to be free from sufferings.

Level 9(9 yr): You have achieved the above levels. You know all the 12 links of dependent origination. You know which cause has which effect. You are able to intercept on at least one of the links and are able to break the cyclic cause and effect relationship and thus are very near to achieving Nirvana. Thus you know and act such that all your actions, speech and thought are free from cause and effect. All your karmas are now non-volitional i.e. not involving desire or craving.

Level 10(10 yr): You have achieved the above levels. You have now attained Nirvana and can see yourselves as the Buddha's disciple standing outside the dependent origination chart and observing the world as it is. The world as impermanent, with no concept of self and the world full of sufferings caused due to ignorance to see the truth. Thus free from ignorance all actions, speech and thoughts are perfected. You are now an Arahant. But wait! Be cautious! You may not have achieved Nirvana and will be lethargic and can drift back from this stage. So maintain your awareness and maintain the state where all your sufferings have ended because of your wholesome acts or acts not involving desire. You may still have to suffer physical pain as our human body has a tendency to decay, old age and death. You may also have to suffer for your bad karma in the past but no new karma is created.

The years mentioned against each level is to give an idea of the amount of effort one needs to put at each level to attain Nirvana. Thus with proper efforts we can achieve Nirvana in 10 years or less or more depending on your efforts and grasping of insight and acting upon it and also on the level and effort in meditation. We may not achieve complete perfection in each level unless we go to the next level. E.g. our actions and speech will not be perfect unless we reach level 3 where our thoughts are purified. Our thoughts will not be pure unless we are totally aware all the time of all our thoughts in level 4, which will not be perfected unless in level 5 our meditation is perfected and we have trained our mind to monitor itself.

Chapter 11: Matrix Analogy

Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself.

–Morpheus

The Matrix – a Hollywood movie released with two sequels as Matrix Reloaded and Matrix Revolutions together called the Matrix Trilogy is a very good movie and there is no doubt about it. But what one doesn't know or was purposefully left by the directors of the movie was the hidden meaning behind the Movie. After watching the movie, most people are left with intriguing questions and some left with their own meaning of what the Matrix is. But why am I discussing a movie in this book/ Does it have anything to do with attaining Nirvana? Does it have anything to do with Buddhism? The answer is a definite yes. The movie is a good blend of Buddhist teachings and Computer concepts and a story of its own.

A disclaimer here – The views and interpretation of the Movie is of the author alone and are not expected to match the view of the directors or any other person, though it is a good analogy for Buddhist teachings.

Concept:

The two worlds dominating the movie are the Matrix and the Zion.

Matrix: The Matrix is a software world, powered by human beings, who are used as batteries to run the Matrix. All the human senses are emulated by the software called Matrix, which makes them feel the virtual world is real. Everything in the Matrix is a program. The birds (all animals), all events, the environment, etc are all programmed software.

The Matrix represents our world of sense pleasures. Our world like the Matrix is bound by Ignorance. We like the people in Matrix are unable to see the reality as it is. Our world like the Matrix is conditioned, conditioned by the mind to be real and permanent, which in reality is impermanent, and lacking in substantialness and bound to deliver Dukkha.

Zion: The real world (in the movie Matrix). The human beings trapped in the Matrix are freed by the residents of Zion. Morpheus rescues Neo from the Matrix as he believes that Neo will be able to rescue all the people from the Matrix.

The Zion represents the Community of Monks/Buddhists called Sangha. The Arahants and the members of the Sangha try to liberate the laymen with Buddha's Teachings (Dhamma), from the world of sense pleasures which is bound by dukkha.

Neo: An Acronym for The 'One' who will free all the people from the Matrix. Mr. Anderson in Matrix and called Neo in Zion. He is a Hacker in Matrix with inquisitive mind and encouraged by Morpheus to understand the Matrix. He gains understanding of the Matrix, which gives him more control and power in Matrix and he is even able to fly freely in Matrix.

Neo is an analogy for the Buddha [The Enlightened/Awakened 'One']. Buddha understood the world of Samsara, the Dukkha and became free from the world of Samsara to attain Nirvana. It can be observed that Neo represents the future Buddha – Maitreya.

Morpheus: Morpheus is a resident of Zion with very strong beliefs. He believes that Neo can save the lives of those in Matrix. He is ready to give his life and limb to save Neo so that all the people in the Matrix can be freed.

Here Morpheus represents a Bodhisattva, who is ready to give his life and limb for the benefit of others. Also Morpheus is bald which shows his association with Buddhist monks.

The Architect: The Matrix is programmed by the Architect, who in turn is also a software program and part of Matrix.

The Architect represents the world of Gods – the great architect of the Universe.

The Oracle: The Oracle also represents Deva Loka. She knows the future and understands the Matrix and its workings, but doesn't have much control on it.

Merovingian: Merovingian is a person with huge amount of money and power. He trades in information. Even though he has a lot of money and power he wants more money and more power.

Merovingian represents the world of Titans who fight with each other and the Gods for more power and status.

The Twins: Has the ability to pass through Material Objects.

They represents the world of Hungry Ghosts.

Birds : The birds in Matrix are programs similar to programs written for sunrise and sunset

The birds in Matrix represents the animal world. They have consciousness, but lack understanding and knowledge.

Lets us review the dialogues of the Matrix Trilogy

The Matrix

- *Morpheus: The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us, even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.*

Here Morpheus refers to the nature of *Samsara* or the world of sense pleasures, that blinds us from observing the truth.

- *Morpheus: Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself.*

Morpheus here speaks of Nirvana. It is very difficult to explain Nirvana. You have to experience it yourself.

- *Morpheus: Is it really so hard to believe? Your clothes are different. The plugs in your arms and head are gone. Your hair has changed. Your appearance now is what we call **residual self image**. It is the mental projection of your digital self.*

Here Morpheus speaks of the mind and body duality, we saw in the chapter Dependent Origination.

- *Morpheus: What is real? How do you define real? If you're talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain. This is the world that you know.... You've been living in a dream world, Neo.*

Here again Morpheus speaks of the nature of *Samsara*, the world as we see with our limited faculties of senses – the Six Senses (referred in chapter on Dependent Origination) and interpreting it as real or permanent.

- *Morpheus : When the Matrix was first built, there was a man born inside who had the ability to change whatever he wanted, to remake the Matrix as he saw fit. It was he who freed the first of us, **taught us the truth**: ‘As long as the Matrix exists the human race will never be free.’ After he died the Oracle prophesied his return and that his coming would hail the destruction of the Matrix.... That is why there are those of us who have spent our entire lives searching the Matrix looking for him.*

Here Morpheus refers to Gautama, the Buddha, who freed the first of us from suffering, from dukkha. The Buddha taught us the Four Noble truth. After his death it is prophesied that a future Buddha, Maitreya, having deep compassion and incomparable love for all living beings would come into existence. A lot of Buddhist countries are searching for Maitreya – The future Buddha.

- *Morpheus: I’m trying to free your mind, Neo, but I can only show you the door, **you’re the one that has to walk through it....** You have to let it all go, Neo, fear, doubt, and disbelief. Free your mind.*

Here Morpheus speaks of the Noble Eight Fold path, that has to be followed by each one for himself. He also speaks of freeing our mind through meditation and awareness.

- *Morpheus: The Matrix is a system, Neo. That system is our enemy. But when you’re inside, you look around. What do you see? Business people, teachers, lawyers, carpenters. The very minds of the people we are trying to save. But until we do, these people are still a part of that system, and that makes them our enemy. You have to understand, most of these people are not ready to be unplugged. And many of them are so inert, so hopelessly dependent on the system that they will fight to protect it.*

Until people are aware of Nirvana, aware of the three universal truth of impermanence, not self and Dukkha, they are inert and do not want to be unplugged or want to remain in the world of sense pleasures. They also expect you to enjoy the world of sense pleasures. Thus, they will prevent you from attaining Nirvana.

- *Cypher: You know, I know this steak doesn’t exist. I know that when I put it in my mouth, the Matrix is telling my brain that it is juicy and delicious. After nine years, you know what I realize? Ignorance is bliss.*

Even those who know the Buddha’s teachings are so attracted to sense pleasures that they don not want to leave it. They would prefer to remain ignorant and remain in the endless cycle of Samsara.

- *Spoon boy: Do not try and bend the spoon. That’s impossible. Instead only try to realize the truth....Then you’ll see that it is not the spoon that bends, it is only yourself.*

You need to realize the three universal truth of impermanence, not self and dukkha. We see unsatisfactoriness or suffering in the world, while unsatisfactoriness exists within ourselves by not realizing the truth.

- *Morpheus: Neo, sooner or later you’re going to realize, just as I did, that there’s a difference between knowing the path and walking the path.*

Here Morpheus speaks of following the Eight Fold Path. While most people know the Eight Fold Path and some are even experts in Buddhist philosophies, very few actually follow the path. Only by following the path can Nirvana be attained.

Chapter 12: Matrix Analogy Reloaded

Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself.

–Morpheus

- *Wurm: How did you know someone was here?*
- *Link: He's doing his Superman thing.*
- *Trinity: How does he always know?*

These are some of the powers of the One – Neo that he gains through understanding of the Matrix. These are also some of the powers that are gained through meditation. These are usually distractions from the goal of Nirvana. You will observe that Neo shows no pride for these powers and they are never used unless necessary.

- *Neo: I told you, Kid, you found me, I didn't find you... You saved yourself.*

Here you can see that a person is responsible for his own karma and only by his own effort can a person be liberated from his suffering. No one, not even a Buddha, can liberate anyone from his suffering unless he puts his own efforts.

- *Councillor Hamann: I suppose we do, but down here sometimes I think about all those people still plugged into the Matrix.*

Councillor Hamann who has speaks of all the people still suffering engrossed (plugged) in the world of samsara.

- *The Oracle: He's being held prisoner by a very dangerous program **one of the oldest** of us. He is called the Merovingian, and he will not let him go willingly.*

Neo: What does he want?

The Oracle: What do all men with power want? More power.

Titans are one of the oldest from the world systems. Humans appeared later have limited life span. They have power but still want more power and fight amongst themselves and even with the gods for power.

- *Merovingian: You see, there is only one constant, one universal, it is the only real truth: causality. Action. Reaction. Cause and effect.*

About Dependent Origination. Cause and effect leading to the never ending cycle of samsara.

- *Merovingian: Causality. There is no escape from it, we are forever slaves to it. Our only hope, our only peace is to understand it, to understand the 'why.' ... Another link in the chain.*

Causality – Cause and effect – Dependent Origination – There is no escape from it. Only hope is to understand 'why' we suffer, why can't the chain of dependent origination be broken easily, By Understanding the 'why' of suffering we remove our ignorance regarding dukkha, impermanence and 'anatta' and can break the link in the chain.

- *This level is filled with doors. These doors lead to many places, hidden places, but one door is special. One door leads to the Source. This building is protected by a very secure system.*

Keymaker: But like all systems it has a weakness. The system is based on the rules of a building. One

system built on another.

The door to Nirvana leads to the source, to liberation from suffering, to the disintegration into the component parts that of earth, water, fire and air and the five skandas of feelings, consciousness, thought, contact, etc. System is built one system on another, body on mind, mind on body.

The Architect Dialogue

- *Architect: Hello, Neo.*

Neo: Who are you?

Architect: I am the Architect. I created the Matrix. I've been waiting for you. You have many questions, and though the process has altered your consciousness, you remain irrevocably human. Ergo some of my answers you will understand, and some of them you will not. Concordantly, while your first question may be the most pertinent, you may or may not realize it is also the most irrelevant.

God created the world. Neo has still not attained Nirvana and hence he is still a human, but the process has altered his consciousness. (After attaining Nirvana though a person remains physically human till death, he rises above all the world systems and free from any form of suffering).

- *Neo: Why am I here?*

Architect: Your life is the sum of a remainder of an unbalanced equation inherent to the programming of the Matrix. You are the eventuality of an anomaly, which, despite my sincerest efforts, I have been unable to eliminate from what is otherwise a harmony of mathematical precision. While it remains a burden assiduously avoided, it is not unexpected, and thus not beyond a measure of control. Which has led you, inexorably... here.

The world of samsara is perfect and the cycle of samsara continues forever and ever without breaking for all the beings in all the world systems alike. The cycle of happiness and suffering continues in harmony. Due to the anomaly in the system – that of endless suffering due to ignorance to see the world as it is – Buddha, who sees the world as it is i.e. impermanent, not self and full of suffering, comes into being for the total eradication of suffering.

- *Neo: You haven't answered my question.*

Architect: Quite right. Interesting. That was quicker than the others.

TV Neos: Others? How many others? What others? Answer my question!

Architect: The Matrix is older than you know. I prefer counting from the emergence of one integral anomaly to the emergence of the next, in which case this is the 6th version.

TV Neos: 5 `One's before me? 4 3 2 What are you talking about?

Neo: There are only two possible explanations, either no one told me, or no one knows.

Architect: Precisely. As you are undoubtedly gathering, the anomaly is systemic – creating fluctuations in even the most simplistic equations.

Here they are speaking of the other Buddhas who existed before the present one that we know of. Buddha spoke of Buddhas who existed before him from a definite time period before him as there is infinite past and there is no beginning or an end of the Universe.

- *Architect: The first Matrix I designed was quite naturally perfect, it was a work of art – flawless, sublime. A triumph equalled only by its monumental failure. The inevitability of its*

doom is apparent to me now as a consequence of the imperfection inherent in every human being. Thus, I redesigned it based on your history to more accurately reflect the varying grotesqueries of your nature. However, I was again frustrated by failure. I have since come to understand that the answer eluded me because it required a lesser mind, or perhaps a mind less bound by the parameters of perfection. Thus the answer was stumbled upon by another – an intuitive program, initially created to investigate certain aspects of the human psyche. If I am the father of the matrix, she would undoubtedly be its mother.

Neo: The Oracle.

Here the Architect speaks of the creation and destruction of the world many times. Our world that of humans too has similarly been created and destroyed many times.

- *Architect: Please. As I was saying, she stumbled upon a solution whereby nearly 99% of all test subjects accepted the program, as long as they were given a choice, even if they were only aware of the choice at a near unconscious level. While this answer functioned, it was obviously fundamentally flawed, thus creating the otherwise contradictory systemic anomaly, that if left unchecked might threaten the system itself. Ergo those that refused the program, while a minority, if unchecked, would constitute an escalating probability of disaster.*

Neo: This is about Zion.

Most of us accept the world as we see it (99% for the Matrix), which is ofcourse the false view. Those who see the right view (the dhamma – Buddha’s teaching – anicca, anatta and dukkha) forming the Sanga (Zion in Matrix).

- *Architect: You are here because Zion is about to be destroyed – its every living inhabitant terminated, its entire existence eradicated.*

Neo: Bullshit.

TV Neos: Bullshit!

Architect: Denial is the most predictable of all human responses, but rest assured, this will be the sixth time we have destroyed it, and we have become exceedingly efficient at it.

Architect: The function of the One is now to return to the Source, allowing a temporary dissemination of the code you carry, reinserting the prime program. After which, you will be required to select from the Matrix 23 individuals – 16 female, 7 male – to rebuild Zion.

Failure to comply with this process will result in a cataclysmic system crash, killing everyone connected to the Matrix, which, coupled with the extermination of Zion, will ultimately result in the extinction of the entire human race.

Our Earth has been created and destroyed many times earlier. After the death of the Buddha there is no further rebirth as both the body and mind (consciousness) decompose into its component parts i.e. return to its source.

- *Neo: You won't let it happen. You can't. You need human beings to survive.*

Architect: There are levels of survival we are prepared to accept. However, the relevant issue is whether or not you are ready to accept the responsibility of the death of every human being on this world.

It is interesting, reading your reactions. Your 5 predecessors were, by design, based on a similar

predication – a contingent affirmation that was meant to create a profound attachment to the rest of your species, facilitating the function of the One. While the others experienced this in a very general way, your experience is far more specific – vis a vis love.

Neo: Trinity.the cost of her own.

Neo: No.

Profound love towards all living beings (Metta) one of the four Brahma Viharas (Heavenly States of mind) were present in all previous Buddhas, but is very specific in the future Buddha i.e. Maitreya Buddha who has incomparable love to all living beings (Metta).

- *Architect: Which brings us at last to the moment of truth, wherein the fundamental flaw is ultimately expressed, and the anomaly revealed as both beginning and end. There are two doors. The door to your right leads to the Source, and the salvation of Zion. The door to your left leads back to the Matrix, to her and to the end of your species. As you adequately put, the problem is choice. But we already know what you are going to do, don't we? Already, I can see the chain reaction – the chemical precursors that signal the onset of an emotion, designed specifically to overwhelm logic and reason – an emotion that is already blinding you from the simple and obvious truth. She is going to die, and there is nothing you can do to stop it.*

Architect: Hope. It is the quintessential human delusion, simultaneously the source of your greatest strength and your greatest weakness.

Neo: If I were you, I would hope that we don't meet again.

Architect: We won't.

The fundamental flaw of Samsara – Anomaly – annica, anatta and dukkha – as both the beginning and end of suffering.

As Neo is still a human during the dialogue and not gained complete understanding of Matrix (attained Nirvana) he is still affected by blinding emotion of human beings.

Chapter 13: Matrix Analogy Revolutions

Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself.

–Morpheus

Coming Soon

Chapter 14: FAQs

- You are trying to modify the original teachings?

No. The Buddha's teachings are the same and you can refer any other sources to verify the teachings. We are only trying to make the teachings easy for practice in daily life. This may not be very helpful to Buddhist monks as they already follow the Eight Fold Path and know the Dhamma right. Buddha taught the same teachings to both Monks and Ordinary people, but only making it strict for the monks to follow the teachings, and as guide for ordinary people to reduce their suffering.

- It is not practical to follow the precepts in our daily life.

You are definitely right. But when are we aware that what we are doing is practical or not. If it is practical to avoid doing an act do we actually avoid it. And it is always practical to follow the precepts in our thoughts. But still we think of killing, stealing, lying, smoking, drinking, etc. Buddha's teachings were for eradication of sufferings. If we can avoid even one of our evil actions, we our sufferings are reduced to that extent. If we can avoid all our evil action and do good actions on understanding the real nature of sufferings, we will eradicate all sufferings from our life.

- I do not believe in the different worlds and the chart is mythical.

You do not have to believe in the different worlds for the chart to be practical. There is no doubt that people fall down (are ashamed, disrespected, hated, ignored) engrossed with ignorance, lust and anger and others rise up (are loved, respected) freed from ignorance, lust and anger. Some people like hungry ghosts keep lusting after things and thirst is not quenched even after getting. Some are already wealthy and have power and still fight for more power and wealth for showing their status. Some are content. There should also be no doubt on the twelve links as they are straight forward.

- I have a different idea, which can make following the Eight Fold path much easier.

You can follow any idea or technique that suits you. You can also share it with others on our website. Our idea of using the palm is that whenever we look at the palm we are reminded of the Eight Fold path and the Dependant Origination. The images are made such that you can easily associate and remember what part of your palm depicts what teaching.

- Will I really attain nirvana?

Ans. Definitely yes. If it were not possible, then Buddha would not have taught it. Also if it was not possible, there would not have been so many Buddhists and so many opting to become monks leaving a pleasurable layman's life.

- Is there anyone now I can meet who has attained Nirvana?

Ans. There are many monks who have attained Nirvana. But usually no monk speaks of the level of progress they have made, which can lead to false pride. Also there are many sadhus & yogis in India who have got Moksha – Nirvana in Buddhist context, only that their values, principles and path differ from Buddhism.

- It is very difficult to follow the Eight fold path and to meditate. I also loose interest and do not follow it most of the time.

Ans. It all depends upon the effort one puts on following the path. Putting too much effort gets one disappointed and looses faith. Putting too little effort doesn't take one anywhere and he too looses faith. One should put right effort enough to remain on the path till one attains Nirvana.

- Where should I find a guide or right Buddhist teacher?

Ans. No one is perfect until he has achieved Nirvana. But expect every monk to be a right teacher as they are very strict in following the rules of the monastery and usually know the teachings right. Other than monks, those people who are practicing Buddhism should provide you with the necessary teachings of Buddha, practicing meditation, providing guidance, etc. There are lots of books on Buddhism and some of them are even for free distribution that you can refer. Also the internet is full of references on every topic you have doubt for. This website may not be the best reference for the teachings of the Buddha, but it definitely is very good reference for practicing and practical way of attaining Nirvana in today's lifestyle.

Chapter 13: Check your progress

This chapter is a questionnaire to test our progress. This will tell us where we stand and where we lack in attaining Nirvana. This is similar to the Graduation system in chapter 10. In Graduation System you observe your progress step by step. The system is simple and very easy to follow and understand. In this chapter we check our progress in parallel in all the levels discussed in Graduation System. You should have observed that the Noble Eight Fold path has eight aspects to a single path and all the aspects are followed in parallel to achieve Nirvana. So, those who have thought that ten years to Nirvana mentioned in Graduation System is very difficult or impossible should reconsider it to a far lesser time with proper discipline, understanding and guidance.

So, let us check our progress. Most of the answers are expected in affirmative.

- Are you free from greed? **Y/N**
- Are you free from anger? **Y/N**
- Are you free from delusion? **Y/N**
- Where do you place yourself in the world system? (You can place yourself in more than one world that dominate most of your life) **Gods / Titans/ Human / Animal / Hungry Ghosts / Hell**
- Are you free from anger? **Y/N**
- Are you aware of your actions? **Y/N**
- Are you aware of your thoughts? **Y/N**
 - If yes, then Are you able to subdue unhealthy thoughts and develop good thoughts? **Y/N**
- Are you aware when your senses have contact with its corresponding objects? **Y/N**
- Are you able to control your thoughts that flow when there is sense contact with its sense object? **Y/N**
- Are you aware of the impermanence of events, objects around you when you interact with them? **Y/N**
- Are you aware of anatta (no permanent soul) when you refer to yourself or think of yourself? **Y/N**
- Are you aware of Dukkha associated with attaching to the concept of self and thinking of things as permanent when in fact they are impermanent? **Y/N**
- Do you accept the concept of Karma and believe in it? **Y/N**
- Do you accept the concept of rebirth? **Y/N**
- Do you accept the concept of Dependant Origination? **Y/N**
- Do you understand what Nirvana is? **Y/N**
- Do you want to attain Nirvana? **Y/N**
- If yes,
 - Do you want to be a monk? **Y/N**
 - Do you want to remain a layman and enjoy sense pleasures? **Y/N**
 - Do you want to remain a layman but want to be strict like a monk? **Y/N**
- If No, do you want to just be free of Dukkha, but do not want any of the above choices? **Y/N**

About

Welcome, Neo. As you no doubt have guessed, I am Morpheus.

–Morpheus

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