

Dhamma Talk The Most Venerable
(Dēsanā) by Mahākammattanacariya Nauyane
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5. The Four Ways To [Attain] Psychic Power

(Iddhi pada)

Namo tassa Bhagavato, Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa.

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

*Chanda-samādhippadhāna-sankhāra-samannāgatan
iddhi-pādan bhāvēti.*

*Viriya-samādhippadhāna-sankhāra-samannāgatan
iddhi-pādan bhāvēti.*

*Citta-samādhippadhāna-sankhāra-samannāgatan
iddhi-pādan bhāvēti.*

*Vīmansā-samādhippadhāna-sankhāra-samannāgatan
iddhi-pādan bhāvēti.*

(D.18; S.51:1Ý8; A.1:398Ý401)

He develops the way to [attain] psychic power that is
endowed with concentration attained by desire and
exertion.

He develops the way to [attain] psychic power that is
endowed with concentration attained by energy and
exertion.

He develops the way to [attain] psychic power that is
endowed with concentration attained by [wholesome]
consciousness and exertion.

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He develops the way to [attain] psychic power that is endowed with concentration attained by investigation and exertion.

Faithful Devotees, this is a brief reference to the four ways to [attain] psychic power, which were taught by the Buddha, the fully enlightened one.

This means to develop the four ways to [attain] psychic power with desire, energy, [wholesome] consciousness and investigation taking each one as the most important at a time. We must consider that if we understand how the ways to [attain] psychic power develop in performing all the wholesome activities of charity (*dāna*), moral behaviour (*sīla*) and meditation (*bhāvanā*),¹ we can realize the greatness (*udaratta*), depth (*gambhīratā*) and special quality (*visesatā*) of such wholesome actions.

The Buddha in a previous life [just before he had aspired to become a Buddha-to-be (Bodhisatta)] was called Mātuposaka, some twenty incalculable (*asankheyya*²) and 100,000 (= $20 \times 10^{140} + 1 \times 10^5$) aeons³ (*mahā-kappas*) ago, and he attended to all the needs of his

¹ C.f. It.22 for *dāna* Ḳ giving/generosity, *sāla* Ḳ morality and *bhāvanā* Ḳ meditation. At D.33 & the Comm. to that, A.8:36 and It.60 Ḳ there is mention of the 'made from' generosity/moral restraint/[mental] development (*dāna-sāla-/bhāvanā-mayaṣ puṁṁa-kiriya-vatthu*) bases for making merit.

² In some of the Pāḁi grammar books, e.g. Kaccāyana-vyākaraḁa, the high numbers are given as follows: *koṇi* (10^7), *pakoṇi* (10^{14}), *koṇi-pakoṇi* (10^{21}), *nahuta* (10^{28}), *ninnahuta* (10^{35}), *akkhobhinā* (10^{42}), *bindu* (10^{49}), *abbuda* (10^{56}), *nirabbuda* (10^{63}), *ahaha* (10^{70}), *ababa* (10^{77}), *aṅaṅa* (10^{84}), *sogandhika* (10^{91}), *uppala* (10^{98}), *kumuda* (10^{105}), *puḁōarāka* (10^{112}), *paduma* (10^{119}), *kathāna* (10^{126}), *mahā-kathāna* (10^{133}) and *asaḁkheyya* (10^{140}); many of the above numbers are also the names of hell realms, see S.6:7 = Sn.65Ḳ678, but here it says that twenty *abbudas* is equal to one *nirabbuda* (this is terms of the lifespan of someone reborn there), twenty *nirabbudas* is equal to one *ababa*, twenty *ababas* is equal to one *ahaha*, twenty *ahaha* is equal to one *aṅaṅa* and then so on in this manner up to one *paduma*!

³ Even though this should read 'twenty incalculable and 300,000 aeons' here to be accurate (i.e. when the three periods of time given below are added

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parents. Then while on a sea-trading trip in which he was accompanied by his mother, the ship sank and all the passengers, with the exception of the two of them, drowned. He then swam, with his mother on his back, for three days until they reached safety. At this point in time he had not specifically aspired to attain Buddhahood, he was just a noble and grateful son who was looking after his mother, when all of a sudden the aspiration arose in his mind. This is how it arose: a *Suddhāvāsa* brahma deity, having arisen from the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*⁴), viewed the world to ascertain whether there was a Buddha at that time. There was no Buddha or even the Teachings (*sāsana*) of one left after He had finally passed away then; [at such times as this there are non-returners] and, though rare, arahants in the Pure Abode Brahma realms.⁵ He considered this young man, who showed such gratitude towards his mother, suitable to attain Buddhahood and wished that the idea for him to aspire to attain Buddhahood would arise in his mind. Then while thinking these thoughts directed towards Mātuposaka the thought arose in Mātuposaka's mind.⁶ A strong desire, energy, consciousness and investigative wisdom actually arose in his mind. When these four

together), it is usually referred to as above. One aeon (*mahā-kappa*) is the time that it takes for this world, the lower worlds and all the deity-realms up to the world of the Mahābrahmas to complete one period of expansion and contraction, this period has four phases: contracting phase, contracted phase, expanding phase and expanded phase (A.4:156), each one of an incredibly long period of time; concerning the contracting phase see A.7:66, and for the expanding phase see D.27.

⁴ At Vism.XXIII,16-52 this attainment, which is said to be only entered upon by non-returners (*anāgāmīs*) and arahants who have attained the eight attainment concentrations (*añña samāpattiyo*), is discussed in some detail. See also D.9, M.44, S.14:11 & A.9:31-36.

⁵ There are non-returners (*anāgāmīs*) more or less continuously residing in the five Pure Abode (*Suddhāvāsa*) realms, these realms are called as follows: Aviha, Atappa, Sudassa, Sudassā and Akaniñña and the life-spans of those (only *anāgāmīs* - see A.4:124) who take rebirth in each of these realms are of increasing length, i.e. 1,000, 2,000, 4,000, 8,000 and 16,000 eons (*mahā-kappas*) respectively, see also D.14, 33 and AS.V:8 & 14.

⁶ The thoughts of one being can affect those of another, especially when the mind is refined.

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ways to [attain] psychic power first developed in his mind the following wish arose:

*Buddhohan bodhayissāmi muttohan mocayē parē,
tittohan tārayissāmi sansāroghā mahabbhayā.*

[When] I am a Buddha I will enlighten [the others],
[when] I am freed I shall free the others,
[when] I have crossed I'll help [the others] to cross,
the flood of the round of existence, so perilous.

He considered thus: if by the realization of the four noble truths I attain Buddhahood, I will cause the others to realize. I will by the realization of the four noble truths rid myself of all suffering and rescue other inhabitants of this world by helping them to realize the four noble truths. I will escape from this perilous *sansāra* and cause others to do the same. This was the wish that arose due to the strong wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigative wisdom. On that day this great wise person was able to safely come out of the ocean with his mother. Thereafter he treated his mother like a deity, a Brahma or a Buddha for the rest of her of life. At the final moment of her life his mother wished and blessed that her son would someday become a Sammāsambuddha as a result of his looking after his parents on land and sea, even at the risk of his own life. This blessing resulted from the desire, energy, consciousness and investigation that arose in his mind in the great ocean.

From then onwards for a period of seven *asankheyya* and one hundred thousand aeons he continued to listen to Dhamma and perform wholesome actions whilst meeting 125,000 Buddhas and aspiring in his mind (*mano-panidhāna*) with powerful wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigative wisdom to attain Buddhahood. After that, beginning from Purāna-gotama Buddha's Sāsana, for a period of nine *asankheyya* (9×10^{140}) and 100,000 aeons he verbally expressed his aspiration (*vāk-panidhāna*) to attain Buddhahood and developed the perfections (*pāramīs*) by being generous, morally restrained, meditating, ordaining as a monk, learning

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Dhamma and developing calm (*samatha*) & insight (*vipassanā*) with powerful wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigative wisdom; during this period he met 387,000 Buddhas.⁷ After that period when he was the ascetic (*tāpasa*) Sumedha, during the period of the Dīpankara Buddha, and could have attained arahantship by merely listening to a four line stanza, but he stretched out in the mud to act as a bridge for the 400,000 monks lead by that Buddha aspiring with determination to attain Buddhahood thinking that it would be better for a valiant person like him to help an innumerable number of beings to escape from sansāra rather than attaining nibbāna then and there. There arose a powerful desire, energy consciousness and investigative wisdom at that moment. Then Dīpankara Buddha presented the ascetic Sumedha with a handful of jasmine flowers and predicted that he would, in another four *asankheyya* and 100,000 aeons, become a Sammāsambuddha called Gotama. Later, on the same day (after the Buddha had departed), when the ascetic Sumedha was going over the ten perfections (*dasa pāramitā*) in his mind there occurred ten earthquakes.⁸

The Bodhisatta for the next four *asankheyya* and 100,000 aeons was able to completely develop the perfections, even giving away his eyes, head, flesh, blood, wives and children⁹ on different occasions during that period, due to his powerful wholesome desire, energy,

⁷ The story of Mātuposaka and the details up to this point are not found in the Pāḍi Canon or its Commentaries, they are, however, related in old Sinhalese books.

⁸ This story is related at Bv.2 and the Comm. to that. At Bv.2:59 there are eight conditions stated that an aspirant for Sammāsambuddhahood must fulfil for his aspiration to be effective, these are: he is a human being, male, be able to attain arahantship (there and then, if he had not aspired to Buddhahood), meets a Buddha (who declares that aspiration his aspiration will be effective), is living as an ascetic, etc. (i.e. not as an householder), has attained the eight attainment concentrations & five supernormal knowledges (see below fn.127 & 130), performs an act of generosity (to that Buddha) and has great desire (to attain Buddhahood).

⁹ Here referring to the five great sacrifices (*pañca mahā-pariccāgā*), which belong to the perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramā*) and are narrated in some of the Jātaka stories.

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consciousness and investigative wisdom. In this manner the Bodhisatta received confirmation from all twenty-four Buddhas,¹⁰ and finally, in his penultimate birth in the human world when he was prince Vessantara, he perfected the aspect of generosity and thus caused earth tremors on seven occasions.¹¹ In that life as Vessantara all ten of the perfections came to fulfilment. After that life he took rebirth in the Tusita heaven as King Setaketu. Thereafter having ascertained the period when those who had aspired to be His [two] chief disciples, [eighty] great disciples and others destined to attain nibbāna during his teaching career would take rebirth in the human world He, accepting the invitation of deities & brahmas [to take rebirth for the benefit of living being], assessed the five great considerations (*panca mahā-vilokanāni*) and then took rebirth with king Suddhodana and queen Mahāmāyā as parents.¹²

The events of the life of the Buddha, such as His conception, birth, enlightenment and giving of the first discourse (the setting in motion of the wheel of Dhamma discourse (Dhammacakkappavattana sutta)), were accompanied by countless amazing miracles in this ten thousand-world system because of the four ways to [attain] psychic power developed over a long time. Because of that, without advice from anyone, the Bodhisatta while seated under the Bodhi tree abandoning all the defilements attained, in order, the four paths &

¹⁰ The twenty-four Buddhas are: Dāpaikara, Koḍḍāca, Maigala, Sumana, Revata, Sobhita, Anomadassā, Paduma, Nārada, Padumuttara, Sumedha, Sujāta, Piyadassā, Atthadassā, Dhammadassā, Siddhattha, Tissa, Phussa, Vipassā, Sikhā, Vessabhā, Kakusandha, Koḍḍagamana and Kassapa; for more details see Bv.

¹¹ S. 1. 5. 17

¹² Dh.11Y12 Comm.: Kālaṣṣa desaṃ ca dāpaṃ ca ḍ kulaṣṣa mātaram eva ca, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx ime paṃ viloketvā ḍ uppajjati mahā-yaso. The time (when people would comprehend the teachings of a Buddha), country (the Middle Country), continent (Rose-apple Continent, i.e. the Indian subcontinent), family (of either the priestly (Brāhman) or ruling (Khattiya) castes) and mother (a virtuous woman), having assessed these five the [one of] great fame (i.e. the Bodhisatta) arises [in His last life]. See also D.19 Comm. and Ud.18 & 42; c.f. D.14 Comm. where the corresponding story for Vipassā Buddha is related.

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fruits and through having matured & fulfilled all the necessary requisites attained the omniscient state of Sammāsambuddha, e.g. the ten power [to know] knowledges (*dasa-bala-nāna*¹³) [of a Tathāgata], four [causes for] self-confidence knowledge (*catu-vesārajja-nāna*¹⁴), etc. and limitless wisdom was due to his having developed wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigative wisdom as a foundation. The Buddha has stated¹⁵ that the basis to attain the

¹³ M.12 & A.10:21 Ý these are: He [wisely] knows as it truly is what is possible as possible and what is impossible as impossible; causally the results of undertaken actions in the past, present & future; all the paths of practice [and where they] lead to; the manifold elements of the world (see S.14:1Ý39); the different dispositions of beings; the degree of development of the [spiritual] dominions of other beings; the impurities, their removal and emergence from (Vibh.16:10 (Màtikā) Ý `emergence' from the impure state and also, as is usually meant, from the concentrated state) of [all] the jhānas, deliverances, concentrations and attainments; he recollects his many-fold past lives (lit. past abodes) in all their details; by clairvoyance he sees the passing away and arising [in a new existence] of other beings according to their [previous] good or bad actions; by the elimination of [all] the [mental] effluents realizes and attains by his own supernormal knowledge in that life freedom by [concentration of] mind and wisdom.

¹⁴ M.12 & A.4:8 Ý these four are: the Buddha, not seeing any sign by which [any] samaōa, brāhman priest, deity, Māra or brahma could justly accuse Him that He is not a fully awakened Sammāsambuddha, has not eliminated [all] the [mental] effluents, those dhammas that He has said are obstructions [to the goal of liberation] are not in fact obstructions and the goal for which He has taught Dhamma does not rightly lead to the elimination of dukkha for the one who practices it, dwells having attained security (*khemappatta*), fearlessness (*abhayappatta*) and self-confidence (*vesārajjappatta*).

¹⁵ At S.51:8 the Buddha says that because He has developed the four *iddhi-pādas* He is called an arahant and Sammāsambuddha. C.f. also S.51:9, where the Buddha uses the same terms that He used when describing His own attainment of enlightenment (S.56:11 (= Mv. Mahākkhandahaka)), i.e. the vision, knowledge, wisdom, understanding and light arose: `This is the way to [attain] psychic power that is endowed with concentration attained by desire/energy/[wholesome] consciousness/investigation and exertion,' `That this way to [attain] psychic power that is endowed with concentration attained by desire/energy/[wholesome] consciousness/investigation and exertion is to be developed,' and `That this way to [attain] psychic power that is endowed with concentration attained by desire/energy/[wholesome] consciousness/

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supramandane states of Sammāsambuddha, Paccekabuddha, Arahant or be reborn in the celestial or brahma realms and realize all one's wishes are the four ways to [attain] psychic power.

Chanda-samādhippadhāna-samannāgatan iddhi-pādan bhāvēti.
Wholesome desire acquired concentration [accompanied by exertion] will result in the development of a way to [attain] psychic power.

Viriya-samādhippadhāna-samannāgatan iddhi-pādan bhāvēti.
Energy acquired concentration [accompanied by exertion] will result in the development of a way to [attain] psychic power that fulfills one's wishes.

Citta-samādhippadhāna-samannāgatan iddhi-pādan bhāvēti.
Wholesome consciousness acquired concentration [accompanied by exertion] form the basis of development of a way to [attain] psychic power for the fulfilment of one's wishes.

Vīmansā-samādhippadhāna-samannāgatan iddhi-pādan bhāvēti.
Wisdom acquired concentration [accompanied by exertion] results in the development of a way to [attain] psychic power for the fulfilment of one's wishes.

There are several meanings of *iddhi*. *Ijghanatthena iddhi* - (lit. in the sense of being successful or accomplishing it is *iddhi*) if things happen according to one's wishes it is called *iddhi*. There are ten such

investigation and exertion has been developed.' At S.51:7 the Buddha states that all monks, past, present and future, that have eliminated the [mental] effluents and realized liberation by [concentration of] mind (*ceto-vimutti*) and liberation by wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*) have done so by the development of the four *iddhi-pādas*. At S.51:15 Ven. ānanda, the Buddha's attendant, showed that even for something as simple as going to a monastery there is desire, energy, mind and investigation involved, moreover the desire, etc. involved therein subsides when the goal of the aspiration is attained and so the abandoning (*pahāya*) of desire (*chanda*), in the attainment of arahantship, is achieved by making use of desire. C.f. A.4:159 also for the use of, for example, craving and conceit to overcome these very same defilements.

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iddhis in the world, and it is the four *iddhi-pādas* that form the basis of all ten. The ten types of *iddhi* are as follows:

- *Adhitthānā iddhi* - Power of determination.
- *Vikubbanā iddhi* - miraculous psychic power
- *Mano-mayā iddhi* - power of spiritual creation
- *nāna-vipphārā iddhi* - power of pervading knowledge
- *Samādhi-vipphāra iddhi* - power of pervading concentration
- *Ariyā iddhi* - power of the noble ones¹⁶
- *Kamma-vipāka iddhi* - power arising as a result of [previous wholesome] actions
- *Vijjā-mayā iddhi* - power by occult practices
- *Punnavato iddhi* - power of merit
- *Sammappayogā iddhi* - power of right endeavour
(Vism.XII;20Y45; Vibh.3:3₂)

Of these the three *adhitthāna iddhi*, *vikubbanā iddhi* and *mano-mayā iddhi* are achieved only by those who have attained the eight attainments (*attha samāpattiyo*¹⁷) and supernormal knowledges (*abhinnā*). Ordinary people¹⁸ cannot attain them. Great individuals¹⁹ who have attained the eight attainments (*attha samāpattiyo*) and gained the five supernormal knowledges (*panca abhinnā*²⁰) can, even without moving from where they are, perform miracles with the power of their determination.

¹⁶ The word '*ariya*,' used as a Buddhist term, refers to anyone who has attained any of the four paths and fruits, but here it is referring to arahants in particular as they have full control over how they perceive things, see below for more on this (p. ___).

¹⁷ I.e. the four *jhānas* and the four formless attainments (*āruppa-samāpattis*).

¹⁸ This is referring to those who have taken (*ahetuka*) and (*dvi-hetuka*) rebirth as human beings.

¹⁹ These people have taken (*ti-hetuka*) rebirth and so as they have the necessary [spiritual] dominion of wisdom (*paññā-indriya*) it is possible to develop this.

²⁰ I.e. the use of psychic powers (*iddhi*), clairaudience (*dibba-sota*), the ability to know the minds of other beings (*ceto-pariya-ñāṇa*), recollection of past lives (*pubbe-nivāsānussati*) and clairvoyance (*dibba-cakkhu*).

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Once Ven. Mahā-Anula Thera seeing many monks sitting by a river (in Sri Lanka) eating just plain rice (which is all they had received from alms round) determined that the water in the river become cream of ghee, he then gave a signal to the novices, who brought it up in bowls and gave it to the community of monks, they all ate [their meal] with honeyed cream of ghee.²¹

Once a monk named Ven. Mahaka²² was staying in Macchikāsanga. One day the householder by the name of Citta,²³ who reached stream-entry by listening to a Dhamma discourse [and later became an anāgāmi(non returner)], asked Ven. Mahaka to perform a miraculous psychic feat, he entered his dwelling (*kuti*) and then willed a psychic feat (*iddhābhisankhāra*) by sending a flame through the key-hole he burnt a bundle of grass that had been placed on a cloak on the veranda, without burning the cloak. This is an *adhitthāna iddhi*. A person who possesses *adhitthāna iddhi*, without physically moving, can turn earth into water, water into earth and make various things appear. Such special powers are referred to as *adhitthāna iddhi*. These *adhitthāna iddhis* are produced because of the practice of meditation and attaining the jhānas by the wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigative wisdom.

Nikubbanā iddhi - is the performance of various types of miracles (*pātihāriyas*) such as making oneself appear as thousands, from being thousands becoming one, dive into the earth, walk in the sky as does a bird flying, appear in all four postures in the sky, touch the sun and moon and take different physical forms. These *nikubbanā iddhi* are manifested due to the attainment of the jhānas with wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigative wisdom [as a basis].

²¹ Vism.XII:128.

²² S.41:4; Vism.XII,85.

²³ A.1:250 Ý Citta was declared to be the one foremost of the Buddha's lay-disciples in speaking Dhamma (*Dhamma-kathika*). See also S.41:1Ý10, A.1:250 Comm. and Dh.303 Comm. for more details about him.

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Mano-mayā iddhi - is the creating of hundreds or thousands of forms similar to oneself. These forms are exact copies of oneself. When the Buddha performs the twin miracle (*yamakamahā-pātihāriya*²⁴) a second Buddha, an exact replica, is made to appear. When Ven. Dabba mallaputtatissa²⁵ was in-charge of assigning lodgings to visiting monks, who sometimes [deliberately] arrived late, after dark, and requested accommodation in various [far away] places such as Gijjhakūta mountain, Vepulla mountain and Isigili mountain, he would make several images of himself appear and accompany the different groups of monks to different locations at the same time. He would then show the requisites such as the walking stick, bed, chair, water container and the images would disappear. These are *mano-mayā iddhi*.

Ven. Cullapanthaka²⁶ failed to memorise one verse after learning it for a period of four months and, at the request of his teacher (who was his elder brother), was going to disrobe. Later he received instructions from the Buddha and became an arahant within a very short time. He had aspired for 100,000 aeons²⁷ to become the one foremost among those possessing *mano-mayā iddhi*. When the physician Jīvaka was about to offer alms to the Saīgha, which was headed by the Buddha, the Buddha requested him to fetch one more monk who was in the mango grove. When he reached the mango grove he found thousands of monks there and reported this back to the Buddha. The Buddha then instructed Jīvaka to call Ven. Cullapanthaka. When he called Cullapanthaka all of them responded and so he reported back to the

²⁴ Accounts of this are given at D.1 Comm., Dh.181 Comm. and J.483 Comm.

²⁵ Vinaya Piñaka (Pārājika-pāḍi, Saīghādisesa 8) Ÿ Ven. Dabba Mallaputta (A.1:214 Ÿ the one foremost of the Buddha's disciples in assigning lodgings (*senāsana-paḍāpaka*)) would, by means of mastery over the fire element (*tejo-dhātu*), light up a finger and show the visiting monks to their quarters; see also the Comm. to this.

²⁶ A.1:198Ÿ199 Ÿ he was declared as the Buddha's disciple foremost in both producing (*abhinimminanta*) a mind-made (*mano-maya*) body and skill in diverting the mind (*ceto-vivañña-kusala*). The following story is related at Dh.25 Comm. & Vism.XII,60Ÿ66.

²⁷ A.1:198Ÿ200 Comm.

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Buddha, who then requested Jīvaka to catch hold of the first monk that you see by the edge of the robe and bring him here. When he caught hold of the first monk's robe all the created images disappeared. This happened because Ven. Cullapanthaka had made thousands of images of himself to appear by his power of *mano-mayā iddhi*. He achieved this state because of the practice of meditation with wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigation.

Next comes the *nāna-vipphārā iddhi*. This is the good fortune of not meeting with any life threatening situation until the attainment of arahantship by those destined to become arahants, in a particular life. Some noble cases of this are the Arahants Ven. Bakkula,²⁸ Ven. Sankicca,²⁹ Ven. Dabbamallaputtatissa and Ven. Bhotapāla.³⁰ Astrologers had advised that Bakkula should be bathed in the river Ganges on the day of his birth. When he was being bathed a fish as large as a boat came on the scene, frightened the mother and swallowed the baby. The child was destined to become an arahant and through the power of that, the fish [was prevented from diving under the water and] floated away like a log and was caught by a fisherman in the city of Bārānasa. The fish was taken from house to house and eventually was sold to a rich housewife for 1000 gold pieces. On cutting open the fish the childless lady found a baby, which was alive and well. While looking after the baby the natural parents came and requested his return, but he was not given back. The natural parents then went and complained to the king, who advised that both parties should bring up the child in turn. Then the child was brought up living for alternate periods of four months each in both families. He was given the name Bakkula because he grew up in two households. Bakkula was ordained after eighty years as a layman, became an arahant after just seven days, and then lived until he was one hundred

²⁸ Bakkula (= *bà + kula* Ý lit. two families (*bà*, but 'ba' before a double consonant Ý found in some compound words means two)) at A.1:226 is declared by the Buddha to be the one foremost of His disciples in regard to good health (*appàbàdha* Ý lit. little or insignificant illness). See M.124 Comm., Vism.XII,27 & Ps.3:2₁₅ Comm. for the above story.

²⁹ Vism.XII,28 & Ps.3:2₁₅ Comm.

³⁰ Vism.XII,29 & Ps.3:2₁₅ Comm.

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and sixty. It was the power of his destiny to become an arahant that caused him to survive inside the stomach of the fish. This is called *nāna-vipphāra iddhi*.

The day before Ven. Sankicca was to be born his mother passed away and was cremated. When her parents visited the cemetery the following morning to extinguish the funeral pyre they found the child alive and sitting on the embers. There was only a slight injury near the eye, which may have happened due to being struck by a piece of wood. The grandparents brought up the baby. At the age of seven he was handed over to the Ven. Sāriputta³¹ for ordination. As his head was being shaved he destroyed all the defilements and attained arahantship. It was the power of *nāna-vipphāra iddhi* that caused him to survive inside the mother's womb during the cremation and while sitting on the embers.

Ven. Dabba mallaputtatissa was conceived by a princess in the city of Kusināra. It was her first child and like in the previous case she passed away near the time of childbirth, and when the body was being cremated the womb burst open and the baby was thrown onto a pile of firewood. He was not hurt at all. He too was offered for ordination at the age of seven years and when the head was being shaven he attained the state of arahant. This baby was protected by the *nāna-vipphāra iddhi* as he was destined to become an arahant.

Ven. Bhotapāla when a child survived one night alone near a cemetery in the thick forest without any hindrance from wild animals and evil spirits. The following day he heard a Dhamma discourse by the Buddha and became a stream enterer.³² He was later ordained and became an arahant. It was the power of the fact that he would attain arahantship [in that life] that protected him from the evil spirits. These are called *nāna-vipphāra iddhi*. They did not arise without reason but

³¹ At A.1:189 Ven. Sāriputta was declared by the Buddha as the one foremost amongst his disciples in regard to great wisdom (*mahā-paṇḍā*) and one of the Buddha's two chief disciples, the other chief disciple was Ven. Mahāmoggallāna. Other Buddhas also have two chief disciples, see D.14.

³² C.f. Dh.296 Comm.

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because of the development of wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigation over hundreds of thousands of aeons (*mahā-kappas*).

Samādhi-vipphāra iddhi is the power of mundane and supramundane penetrating concentration. The power of the *jhānas* affords protection from danger. The young laywoman disciple Uttarā³³ was providing alms to the Buddha and the Sangha in Rajagaha for a continuous period of fifteen days. She had arranged for a courtesan by the name of Sirimā to attend to her husband during the period of her absence. Sirimā developed a deep sense of jealousy and hatred towards Uttarā and on the fourteenth day she came to the place where the food was being prepared and poured boiling oil over the head of Uttarā with the intention of killing her. However, Uttarā was a person who had attained the *jhānas* through loving-kindness meditation; she quickly entered *jhāna* based on *mettā* and due to the power of this *mettā* and *jhāna* the boiling oil became cool when pouring down over her body. However, when a second attempt was made the servants caught and beat Sirimā into submission. Uttarā emerged from *jhāna* and forgave Sirimā. The following day she made Sirimā listen to Dhamma, which succeeded in her becoming a stream-enterer. The escape from the dangers of that heat of the oil was due to the power of concentration. This is called *samādhi-vipphāra iddhi*.

Queen Māgandiyā convinced king Udena, by some false pretences, to kill the chief queen Sāmāvātī³⁴ and 500 others by lining them up and shooting a single arrow through them. However, queen Sāmāvātī and the rest entered *jhāna* based on loving-kindness meditation. The power of this meditation caused the king to freeze and he was unable to shoot the arrow. Sāmāvātī then, having emerged from *jhāna*, addressed the king and asked whether he was tired. The king's mind

³³ A.1:262 Ý Uttarā was designated as the one foremost of the Buddha's laywomen disciples in meditation [attainments (*jhānas*)] (*jhāyā*); the story is related at A.1:262 Comm., Dh.223 Comm., Ps.3:2₁₆ Comm. & Vism.XII,34.

³⁴ A.1:261 Ý Sāmāvātā was the one foremost of the Buddha's laywomen disciples in the abiding of loving-kindness (*mettā-vihārā*); the story is related at A.1:261 Comm., Dh.21Ý23 Comm., Ps.3:2₁₆ Comm. & Vism.XII,35.

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softened and his hands and legs relaxed. He then set aside the bow & arrow and paid respects to Sāmāvātī. Sāmāvātī requested him not to pay respects to her but to seek refuge in her 'father' (i.e. the Buddha). It was on that day the king took refuge in the Triple-gem. The power of jhāna by loving-kindness prevented the group, including Sāmāvātī, from being shot by the arrow. These are referred to as *samādhi-vipphārā iddhi*.

Once on the full moon day at Migadāya the Ven. Sariputta,³⁵ having freshly shaved his head that day, was [sitting] in one of the attainment concentrations (*samādhi*) in the outdoors. A fiendish *yakkha*, while travelling overhead, delivered a severe blow to the head of Ven. Sāriputta. Ven. Moggallāna,³⁶ who witnessed the incident, immediately came to Ven. Sāriputta and asked whether he was in much pain, he replied by saying that he was all right, but had a slight headache. The Ven. Moggallāna said that the blow dealt by the demon was so powerful that it could have smashed a rock as big as an elephant to smithereens. The danger was avoided due to the power of the peaceful attainment. That is *samādhi-vipphāra iddhi*.

A chief disciple, Ven. Sanjīva, of Kakusandha Buddha sat in the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*) at the foot of a tree with the intention of emerging from that the next morning. Passersby noticing that he was not breathing built a funeral pyre, thinking he had passed away, and respectfully 'cremated' him. By the following morning the pyre was completely burnt up. The monk was completely unharmed and not even one thread of his robe was burnt. He then dusted his robes and set off on alms round (*pindapāta*). The people were astonished and said that the monk had passed away and they had cremated him, but now he is alive. From that day onwards he was called Sanjīva.³⁷ That is *samādhi-vipphāra iddhi*. The Ven. Sanjīva, an

³⁵ At Ud.34 & Ps.3:2₁₆ Comm. this story is related.

³⁶ Ven. Mahāmoggallāna (at A.1:190) was declared as the one foremost in psychic power (*iddhimat*) of the Buddhas disciples. These two were the Buddha's chief disciples, see Chapt. 9 (p. __ff.) for more details about them.

³⁷ One meaning of the verbal noun 'sa^vjāva', which is appropriate here, is revival. At M.50 & Ps.3:2₁₆ Comm. this story is related.

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arahant was the second of the prominent pair of disciples (*agga-sāvaka*) and the most accomplished in *iddhi* in the Teaching (*sāsana*) of Kakusandha Buddha.

There are not only one or two incidents of this nature. Even today some meditators say that when they reach the level of access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), mosquitoes come but they can not land on their body and bite them, This is because of the radiation from the body, i.e. radiation of the power of penetrating concentration. These are the benefits of *samādhi-vipphāra iddhi*. The benefits don't come without causes, but because of having practiced generosity, observed precepts, practiced meditation and developed wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigation in successive births.

*Ariyā iddhi*³⁸ are special qualities limited only to arahants. They are capable of perceiving things that normally people consider attractive (*subha*) as unattractive (*asubha*). Similarly, they are adept at perceiving unattractive things as neutral. Once, the Ven. Kassapa,³⁹ an arahant, was on alms round (*pindapāta*) in a very poor neighbourhood, a leper while serving food dropped a finger, which was putrefied and oozing with puss, into his bowl. He noticed the finger only when he began to consume the meal. He did not feel any revulsion but consumed sufficient food for his sustenance and threw away the rotten finger. It is only arahants who can act with such equanimity. This is called *ariyā iddhi*. It arises as a result of the development of wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigation in the process of fulfilling the perfections.

³⁸ D.28; M.152 (one who has this is called a noble one (*ariya*) who has developed the predominances/faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom (*bhāvitindriya*)); Ps.3:217; Vism.XII,36 Ý this is the ability to perceive the repulsive (*pañikkāla*) as unrepulsive (*appañikkālasāññā*), the unrepulsive as repulsive, the repulsive and unrepulsive as unrepulsive, the unrepulsive and repulsive as repulsive or remain in a state of equanimity if and when they so wish.

³⁹ At A.1:191 he was declared by the Buddha as the one foremost of His disciples in [practising and] praising (lit. speaking of/for) the [thirteen] ascetic practices (*dhuta-vāda*), these are explained at Vism.II,2Ý76.

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There is also what is known as *kamma-vipāka-jā iddhi*, which are applicable to both wholesome and unwholesome sides. Birds fly, likewise *petas*, *pisācas*, *kumbhandas*, etc. move in the air without being seen by others and can take possession of others' minds. Deities travel in the air, create whatever they want and enjoy those things. They are not the result of supernormal knowledge, but are *kamma-viāpka-jā iddhi*.⁴⁰

Sometimes there are humans with such powers that can cause others to drop dead. King Vattagāmani-abhaya⁴¹ ground his teeth because of some misconduct by his brother and caused his brother to drop dead. These are *kamma-vipāka-jā iddhi*. Prior to achieving the state of stream-entry, Vessavana⁴² used to frown at the accused brought before him and they would drop dead, as would mustard seeds burst when heated. These are called *kamma-vipāka-jā iddhi*. They occur both on the wholesome and unwholesome sides. If on the wholesome side they arise as a result of wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigation and on the unwholesome side they are the result of unwholesome desire, energy and consciousness. There is no [wise] investigation on the unwholesome side.

Next comes *vijjā-mayā iddhi*, i.e. the power of the occult. These amazing practices were more prevalent in the past than at present. There were various practices such as black magic, the undoing of the effects of black magic, making dead bodies rise up, spirits taking possession of humans' minds & bodies, making demons work for one, the treatment of snakebites and curing diseases by chanting mantras. Here again wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigation form the basis of wholesome acts while unwholesome desire, energy, and consciousness form the basis of unwholesome acts.

Punnavato iddhi - some people are possessed with special powers as a result of past wholesome kamma. The parents of the lay-woman

⁴⁰ Vism.XII,39; Ps.3:2 (Iddhikathā) and the Comm. to that.

⁴¹ A king in Sri Lanka (reigned from 104Y88 B.C. (Vism. Introduction)).

⁴² J.281 Comm. Vessavaḍa, one of the four Cātummahārājika kings of the lowest of the six celestial realms, rules over the *yakkhas*.

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disciple Visākhā were Dhananjaya and Sumanadeva. Dhananjaya's parents were Mēndaka and Candapadumā. These four, i.e. Visākhā's parents and grandparents, had a servant named Punna. All of these five had special *punnavato iddhi*.⁴³ When Mēndaka looks up at the sky after a bath it rains paddy enough to fill 1,250 stores. At the house warming of his palace there arose gold sheep in an area of eight *karāsas*.⁴⁴ These sheep were as big as horses and could produce anything that one wished to have from their mouths,⁴⁵ as if from a wishing tree. This is a result of *punnavato iddhi*.

Chandapadumā would cook about one kilo of rice and offer to anyone who came by. No matter how many spoonfuls of rice were taken from the cooked rice the amount remained the same, this too is a *punnavato iddhi*.

Dhananjaya would take a bag with 1000 gold pieces and start to distribute, giving out 100 to 200 each time, but the 1000 pieces never reduces. That is *punnavato iddhi*.

Sumanadeva would take a quantity of seed paddy and distribute portions of that to anyone who comes, but the original quantity remains exactly the same.

The servant Punna while making one cut with a plough, seven more cuts on either side would appear, giving him an additional fourteen cuts this is *punnavato iddhi*.

Wholesome desire, energy, consciousness and investigation that arose in performing a wholesome act in a previous life are the causes of this special power.

⁴³ Vism.XII,42

⁴⁴ Ps.1:50 Comm. Ý this is an old measure of area, one *karāsa* is equivalent to four *ammauas*; according to Sinhalese calculations eight *karāsas* is equal to the area that can be sown with 64 bushels (= 291 litres) of paddy, which is equal to about 32 acres (= 12.95 hectares).

⁴⁵ This particular aspect is related at Ps.3:2 Comm.

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Just before the one-year anniversary after His enlightenment, the Buddha together with 1,250 monks visited the town where Visākhā, a girl who was seven years old at the time, was living. All the members of her family, while listening to a discourse given by the Buddha at that time, became stream-enterers⁴⁶ (*sotāpannas*). These, too, are *punnavato iddhis*.

Likewise on the day Jotika⁴⁷ was born the entire city of Rajagaha was glittering. At the age of sixteen when they were inspecting land to construct a palace for him a seven-storied palace arose. This palace was glittering with gems. These are called *punnavato iddhis*. They were results of performance of wholesome actions based on four ways to [attain] psychic power.

Similarly, on the occasion of the house-warming of a palace by Jatila there arose a pure gold rock eighty cubits (~120 ft. = 36.7 m.) in length, breadth and height.

On the occasion of the conception, birth, enlightenment, etc. of the Buddha miracles took place in the ten thousand world system; the Buddha's body displayed the thirty-two marks and eighty lesser marks of a great man, these are *punnavato iddhi*. On the day of Siddhattha Gotama's renunciation a mahābrahma deity, called Ghatikāra, offered him the eight requisites⁴⁸ [of a monk] (*attha parikkhārā*). Siddhattha Gotama cut his hair, threw it up into the sky and it remained there without falling down, then, the king of the deities, Sakka collected that and deposited in Silumini-cetiya (stupa) that he built in Tāvātinsa (celestial realm). When the clothes and other ornaments were thrown up Mahābrahma Ghatikāra took them and deposited in Sātaka-cetiya,⁴⁹

⁴⁶ This story is related at both Dh.53 Comm. and Ud.19 Comm.

⁴⁷ See Vism.XII,41, Dh.416 Comm. & Ps.3:2 Comm. for both this story and the following one with Jañilaka (or Jañila, depending on which book is read).

⁴⁸ These are the monk's three robes (*ti-cāvāra*), alms-bowl (*patta*), razor (*vāsi*), needle (*sāci*), waistband (*kāya-bandhana*) and water-strainer (*parissāvāna*).

⁴⁹ J. Comm. (Nidānakathā) & Bv.27 Comm. Ý this monument (*cetiya*) was twelve leagues (*vojanas*) in size and made entirely of gems (*sabba-ratana-maya*).

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in brahma-loka. These are all *punnavato iddhis*. There are several other similar incidents involving the Bodhisatta. The Bodhisatta attained the jhānas, *abhinnās*, *vipassanā*[-nānas] and the state of buddhahood without the assistance of anyone because of his *punnavato iddhi*.

Here today we are enjoying the special benefits of *punnavato iddhi*. We have two eyes, two ears, a healthy body and a sound mind, all due to power of *punnavato iddhi* [accumulated] in the sansāric past, i.e. wholesome deeds done with wholesome *chanda*, *virīya*, *citta* and *vīmansā*.

Next is *sammappayoga iddhi*. All mundane and supramundane activities performed wisely give suitable (good) results, e.g. if a farmer wisely cultivates his field he will reap a befitting harvest. This is a *sammappayoga iddhi*. Similarly, a trader who acts wisely will end up with suitable profits. One who performs their job wisely will receive promotions. If we consider the supramundane side, wisely giving alms gives suitable results, wisely observing precepts gives suitable results, wisely listening to or learning Dhamma suitably develops Dhamma knowledge, wisely developing the jhānas results in the obtaining of the jhānas, wisely developing supernormal knowledges results in gaining the *abhinnās* and wisely developing insight (*vipassanā*) results in gaining the insight knowledge's (*vipassanā-nānas*). If we wisely fulfil the moral precepts, concentration and wisdom we will attain the paths & fruits of stream-entry, etc. Therefore, when wisely engaging in anything, mundane or supramundane, the desire, energy, consciousness and investigation involved [form the basis and] become the *iddhi-pādas* and this is called *sammappayoga iddhi*.

These four ways to [attain] psychic power, developed by all Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas and Arahants, are dhammas that lead to enlightenment. It is with the help of these dhammas, which lead to enlightenment, that one fulfils all mundane and supramundane wishes. The Buddha attained enlightenment by fulfilling these dhammas that lead to enlightenment (*bodhi-pākkhiya dhammas*) and requisites for Buddhahood (*bodhi-sambhāra*).

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