Bodhi Leaf Publication No. 52

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BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

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Kandy • Sri Lanka

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Digital Transcription Source: Buddhist Publication Society

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by C. F. Knight

From *Metta*, November 1967

Amongst the various attempts to define Buddhism is one that describes it as a system of mental discipline, or mind-training. Probably this is more accurate than most others, for whether we describe it as a philosophy, a religion, or a way of life, having regard to its goal—Nirvana—assuredly we find that "taming the mind" is the key to final liberation.

The importance of mindfulness, or mental discipline, cannot be over-stressed. "All that we are is the result of what we have thought," says the *Dhammapada*. To give those words their full significance is to realise that in that pithy phrase is contained a full statement of the doctrine of karma. From our thoughts flow words and deeds of a karmic

nature, the result of which (*kamma-vipāka*) is that all we are "is founded on our thoughts, is made up of our thoughts." As our past thoughts laid the foundation for our present condition, so our present thoughts are further accentuating or modifying that condition.

In the Mahā Satipaṭṭhānā Suttanta of the Dīgha-Nikāya, the Buddha emphasises the importance of mindfulness. In opening the lengthy discourse he says:

> The one and only path leading to the purification of beings, to the passing far beyond grief and lamentation, to the dying out of ill and misery, to the attainment of right method, to the realisation of Nirvana is that of the Fourfold Setting up of Mindfulness.

In closing his discourse he further stresses its importance by saying:

> Whoso shall practise these Four Applications of Mindfulness for seven years, nay, for six, five, four, three, two or one year only, or even for six, five, four, three, two or one month, or for a fortnight, or even seven days in him one of two kinds of fruition may be looked for: either in this life Arahantship, or if there be yet residuum for rebirth, the state of him who returns no more. It was on account of this that

was said which was said (at the beginning).

The long variable range of time from seven years to seven days is a clear indication that while the setting up of mindfulness is the "one and only path," it is still but a "path," and not the goal. For some it may be longer than for others, according to their pertinacity and the insight acquired, and the hindrances and fetters to be overcome. It is mindfulness that enables us to become conscious of our shortcomings, but it does not eliminate them. That requires possession of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment of which mindfulness is but one in addition to a search for the truth, energy, joy, serenity, rapture and equanimity. Furthermore, the capacity for all factors will quite naturally vary from person to person. Still, the setting up of mindfulness is an all important prerequisite —"the one and only path."

Such then is the necessity for the application of mindfulness insofar as our own spiritual progress is concerned in its most narrow and personal aspect. But it has a much wider application also. Mindfulness at a minimum is consciousness of actuality, awareness, or the grasp of facts independent of insight or intuition. Mindfulness in its broader sense invests every activity, through association of ideas, with a recollection, or calling to mind, of other facts or reactions. For

example, mindfulness of a simple nature may be practised as we go about our daily tasks, observing in a specific way our actions, our immediate environment, the people we meet or pass, and so on. On a higher level, the offerings at the shrine and the repetition of the sacred formulas as we participate in our religious observances partake of a sacramental nature as mindfulness associates them with the object of our devotions. Again, in an even more simple form, it is mindfulness and the association of ideas that keep us from injury, from burning in the presence of fire, and on a higher level, it should make us conscious of the suffering created by the use of fire on other unfortunate beings as in warfare as waged today. As mindfulness protects us from pain and injury, it should also make us unwilling to inflict pain and injury on others. Mindfulness as applied to our personal lives is a necessity if we truly strive for perfection, and it should have a wider application in the appreciation of our relationship to our fellow beings. If we can "put ourselves in the other fellow's shoes," we can develop understanding and compassion in our dealings with him, and this is greatly to be desired today.

Before making mindfulness applicable to our wider contacts, our public life and its relationships, let us consider and understand them as they apply to us

intimately in our own private lives. To engender love of our neighbour, compassion for him, and extend our help towards him, we must first be possessed of a loving nature ourselves; we must have before we can give. There are those who are more or less willing to assist in many ways others who are on a somewhat similar material, social, or spiritual level. Their sympathy and compassion, their generosity, is confined as it were to a horizontal plane, like a pebble dropped into a pool creating expanding ripples on its surface. They give where they can expect to receive in return. They seek for consolation from those whom they consider "will understand them." Other strata of society are either beneath their notice, or regarded with envy as being "better off" and not in need of help or compassion. True *mettā* and *karunā*—love in its widest sense, and compassion—should be like a gong struck in a silent room, from which the sound-waves are global in nature and penetrate to all six directions. To accomplish this, we must first discipline ourselves, and in order to do this we must understand our own make-up of foibles, eccentricities, short-comings, aspirations and ambitions, so mindfulness becomes a necessity and "the only path."

Let us return to the discourse under consideration for guidance. The early portion of this discourse is introspective—know thyself—and is concerned with

(1) the body, in physical structure and activities, (2) feelings, in their sensory meaning, and with regard to their instability, and (3) thoughts, with their ethical and karmic content. The latter portion of the-discourse leads on to (4) mindfulness of ideas, culminating in the perception of the Four Noble Truths, and living within the framework of the Fourth Truth—the Eightfold Way that leads to the "purification of beings, to passing far beyond grief and lamentation, to the dying out of ill and misery, to the attainment of right method, to the realisation of Nirvana."

In considering the body mindfully we find it to be in a continual state of arising and passing away. We become aware of its movements and postures; aware of its need of clothing and sustenance, and how we supply these needs; aware of its component parts and their functions; and aware of its final disintegration—then we can say: "There is body."

So too with feelings, as to whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral; whether they are of a physical nature or of a spiritual nature. We are fully conscious of our reactions to the stimuli affecting our feelings, recognising and classifying the cause and our reaction to it, until we can say: "There are feelings."

Then we mindfully consider our thoughts fathered by our feelings. These cover our conscious life, our

intelligent perception of action and reaction. We, at times, speak of our feelings being “hurt,” but do we ever mindfully reason as to why they are “hurt?” Probably we expected praise, or a gift that did not eventuate or thanks for services given. Or, maybe, we were censured or blamed unexpectedly. If we are mindful we will realise that the indifference, ingratitude, ill will or lack of generosity that ”hurt” our feelings belongs to another, and that vanity, covetousness, self-righteousness, etc, has been an error on our part.

That mindfulness of our thoughts is important we have already mentioned. It is in this realm that karmic volitions arise with their inevitable results to be experienced at some time in the future, in this life or another.

It is mindfulness that will enable us to recognise the three roots of evil arising from basic ignorance. Greed, hatred, and delusion are born of our thoughts due to an ignorance of their potentiality to reflect on our own lives the very results we are projecting towards others.

It is delusion which in turn gives rise to fear, superstition and intolerance on one hand, and on the other attachment, lust for sensual pleasures, craving and clinging.

It is from hatred that anger, malice and strife arise

together with pride, resentment and revenge.

Greed is the source from which arises selfishness, avarice, covetousness, and the lack of generosity.

These evils—greed, hatred, and delusion—first arise to consciousness as the thoughts of our own mind, and later find expression as words and deeds. If we are mindful, it becomes most obvious that in the end we ourselves are the ones who suffer most from their arising.

This mindful self-analysis of our thoughts will enable us to subdue the unwholesome inclinations arising in the mind before they find irrevocable expression in words and deeds. In a like manner we should be just as conscious of wholesome thoughts and inclinations, and foster them. Also we should be conscious of the absence of wholesome thoughts and encourage their arising. Remember: "All that we are is founded on our thoughts, made up of our thoughts." But, do not fall into the famous error of Descartes who declared: "I am thinking, so I exist" (*cogito, ergo sum*). What he should have said on that evidence was: "I am thinking, so there are thoughts."

If the setting up of mindfulness has been successful so far, we know our body for what it is; we know feelings for what they are; we know thoughts with their fateful implications. Now we start to be mindful

of the ideas that arise, the mental or psychological phenomena that are outside of the realm of sensory perception and reaction. If progress is to be made, first we must recognise and be mindful of any deterrents. Undue attachment to sensuous desire may gain admittance through any of the sense-doors, and mindfulness is the guardian of the gates. So too in respect to laziness and indifference, undue anxiety, worry and doubt. These should be promptly recognised and overcome or eliminated, while mindfulness itself should be a conscious factor in our determined search for truth, pursued with energy and joyous serenity and equanimity.

This brings us to the mindful recognition of the Four Noble Truths, the first of which is the all-pervasiveness of what is known in Buddhist circles as *dukkha*, a Pali word incapable of direct translation owing to the wide application of its meaning. The usual translations into "ill," or "suffering," are inadequate, unsatisfactory, and misleading, giving rise to the popular criticism of Buddhism as being pessimistic. Dukkha does include "suffering" "pain" "sorrow" and "misery," it is true, but it embraces a much wider scope of unease. It is defined as the ever-arising of new forms of existence; as growing old, with old age's complements of decrepitude, hoary-ness, the wrinkled state, the shrinkage of life's span, and the

collapse of the sense faculties; as the laying down of the body in death; as the states of woe, heartache, and grief; as the visitation of calamity or illness; as the act and state of mourning, lamenting and deploring; as bodily and mental ill and pain; as the states of dejection and despondency and despair; as not getting what has been wished for.

Elsewhere in the scriptures it is further mentioned that dukkha is being separated from those we love and the things we are attached to; it is also being forced into contact with those we dislike, and having to bear with things which revolt us. Summed up, dukkha may be said to be all that amounts to disease in life. All the sorrows, the disappointments, the frustrations, and failures of our most cherished schemes are dukkha, but one cannot go into all these facets and details each time we wish to speak of the First Noble Truth, so we either use the imperfect and unsatisfactory translations or, better still, the untranslated Pali word—dukkha— rather than give an inadequate and wrong idea of it.

This is but one aspect of life as we know it. The Buddha did not eliminate happiness for either the layman or the monk. But happiness itself is based on an understanding of dukkha, its arising and its cessation. It is based on our individuality—our physical form, our feelings, our perceptions, our

dispositions, and our mental activities as opposed to emotional volition.

The mindful absorption of the First Noble Truth may lend itself to the idea of pessimism if we fail to proceed to the subsequent Truths of its arising, its cessation and the Way leading to its cessation. These, while rebutting the idea of pessimism, are not on the other hand optimistic: they do not do away with the universality of dukkha, but they do lead to an understanding of why dukkha prevails and permeates our lives. By knowing it, realising its cause, and treading the Way to its final abolition, we are enabled to transcend the effect of dukkha, even to attaining the final goal of never returning to suffer again.

Now applying mindfulness to the arising of dukkha we can trace its rise to craving in one form or another, for this or that satisfaction that is so unstable and fleeting. It may be craving for the material things of this world, indulgence of the senses in sensual satisfaction, craving for fame and recognition, craving for the continued relationships of family life, craving for permanence in a world of constant change. Whatever form craving takes, it arises through the senses, through the imagination, or through the memory of past experiences, and only mindfulness will recognise the insidious growth of craving.

The cessation of dukkha is to the mindful person the elimination of that craving which gives rise to dukkha. At times we are faced with those who tell us any pleasure is an attachment and a source of craving, that it is wrong to like music, to admire a sunset, to enjoy one's food, to appreciate odours, or to become attached to other beings. If this were so, then quite rightly Buddhism could be labelled as being pessimistic. But the Buddha and his disciples could admire the beauty of a tropic moonlight night. The Buddha could look back on Vesāli and its beauty with nostalgia as he saw it for the last time. He praised those who cared for their children, and taught that the support of parents, the cherishing of wife and children, and the helping of relatives was of the highest merit. This applied to his monks as well as to laymen. He taught that brotherly love—association with the wise—was one of the highest blessings. The enjoyment of the good things of life was not condemned by the Buddha, although the acquisition of wealth added responsibilities in regard to its use. It is when craving for things not attained, or for the permanency of those which are attained, creeps in that dukkha becomes apparent.

Who has not suffered the loss of a loved one? Perhaps this is the most easy demonstration of attachment, craving, and subsequent dukkha. The

reciprocal love that exists in a family is natural and virtuous in itself. From that untainted source grows the craving for an unbroken continuance of it. When death intervenes, as eventually it must, dukkha finds expression in the sense of loss and the grief that inevitably follows. If we realise that the most pleasant of relationships, the most desirable of experiences, the most fortunate of circumstances, are impermanent and unstable, then we can enjoy them while they last, and part from them with happy memories of the past, rather than with grief and sorrow as to the future.

And so we come to the Way that leads to the cessation of dukkha. It is also the Way that will enable us to give to others, to be mindful of their needs and, moreover, mindful of our obligations concerning them.

This Fourth Noble Truth has its eight sections, or steps, as they are often called. They cover a two-fold set of obligations for one who has set out on the holy life. The first is the further development of his own characteristics on the spiritual plane, and the other is his duty to his fellow men. There is another division usually used in dividing the eight steps, based on the development of ethics, concentration and wisdom. However, as we set out to show our obligation to others, for our purpose we will deal with them on the basis of us and others.

In regard to ourselves the first step is the acquisition of knowledge. By this is inferred a knowledge of the three Truths we have just examined—the mindful realisation of the universality of dukkha, its arising and its cessation. If we are going to be helpful and carry our beliefs into practice for the welfare of others it is obviously necessary that we must have an understanding of the cause and nature of the distress that is so evident in the world of today. This is called Right View.

Then we must be possessed of an aim or aspiration beneficial to others. We need and must have the aspiration toward renunciation in so far as ourselves are concerned—a detachment from selfish desires and ambitions and a willingness to make sacrifices for the good and welfare of others. There must also be the aspiration towards kindness and benevolence in our attitude to others. This is called Right Aspiration.

Our speech needs careful watching for this is so often the source of engendering anger and hatred in others. Lying, slandering, abusive terms, and derogatory statements in regard to others can but have the reaction of repulsion on their part, and lead on to active dislike or aggressive action as a result. To refrain from such speech is called Right Speech.

Speech leads to action as we have just mentioned. If

our speech is right speech, our actions will be so influenced that the aspiration towards kindliness and benevolence becomes almost automatic. The incitement to acts of violence, the taking of life, stealing, or committing carnal offences against our fellowmen cannot arise unless preceded by wrong aspiration and wrong thoughts. To refrain from such behaviour is called Right Action.

The next step is one that is, I think, unique among the injunctions laid upon the devotees of any religion —Right Livelihood. Certainly, the Christian is advised not only to avoid evil, but also the appearance of evil, or what might be assumed to be evil by the critics. Right Livelihood is not only to refrain from actions which in themselves involve direct and immediate harm to others, but also to refrain from depending for means of a livelihood on such a trade or following as will indirectly harm others. The occupations of hunters, butchers, fishers, and the makers of arms, are some of the proscribed occupations. This raises a most difficult point for one who would fulfil all the requirements of the Eightfold Way in the world of today. In a day and time when the world population was so much less, and the opportunities for choosing a trade or following were greater, it may have been possible to avoid occupations which directly or indirectly involved a threat of harm to others. But

today, under modern conditions, it is virtually impossible for any individual to avoid being in some way indirectly involved in the harm of others.

This injunction has been rationalised in some cases by, for instance, employing other religionists as butchers, by driving cattle over a national boundary and then importing the products of the slaughterhouse. Again, during a period of war, a sincere conscientious objector may refuse to be inducted into the army, but he cannot earn a living in any trade or profession without paying taxes to sustain the war effort of his country. Under these circumstances there is no choice, but if there be a choice, for instance, if one can work as a carpenter, and though a slaughter man can earn more than the carpenter, it would be wrong to change to this means of livelihood just for the sake of the extra money to be earned. Difficult indeed is it to avoid harm to others for the layman, and it is obvious that a mass invasion of the Sangha is out of the question!

So we come to what is really a key to all the Steps of the Way—the cultivation of effort. In this essay we are primarily concerned with mindfulness, rather than a general exposition of Buddhist doctrines, and, most of all, the application of mindfulness in relation to our fellow men. But it is not possible to separate any one aspect of the Buddha's teachings and isolate it from all

others. In dealing with the Eightfold Way at some length, we are only as it were setting out the personal prerequisites that will enable us to give of our best. It will require great effort on our part to fulfil the perfecting of right thought, speech, action, and livelihood, even though we have right knowledge and aspiration.

It also does require effort to take an interest in the welfare of others. The general tendency of today is to let others do our thinking for us and then drift along with the crowd, indifferent as to where we are heading, or on whose toes we are treading. It takes mindful effort to concern ourselves with people we scarcely know or whom we have never met. We read of a flood in the East, of an earthquake in the West, of the genocide of a nation in the North, or suffering of civilian population caught between the cross-fire of armies in the South, but they are only items of news—they do not affect us. We are not mindful of the tragedies involved for those who suffer. One of the epithets assigned to the Buddha was "The Awakened One," and because of his Awakening the floodgates of his compassion were opened to embrace all living creatures. For the most part we could be described as "The Asleep" in regard to our relationships with our fellow-men, and compassion is indeed a rare and seldom met characteristic today. We need to be

mindful of our lack in this regard, and overcome the deficiency.

The seventh component factor of the Way is this very mindfulness with which we have been dealing. If subjectively mindfulness is present we should be aware of it, cultivate it, and develop it. If our mental training has been even partially efficient there is a more or less conscious control of our mind. The subjective existence or absence of mindfulness should be noted and mental action taken to develop existing mindfulness, or to bring mindfulness into existence. The whole purpose of Buddhist mind-training is for the adept to be the master of his mind, and by that discipline and mastery perfect his life to his own liberation and the benefit of others.

Much interest today surrounds the hallucinatory drug LSD. Repeatedly we are asked for our opinion as to its effectiveness in gaining "enlightenment," or as an aid to meditation. The key to the answer is already inherent in its scientific classification. It is technically described as a "hallucinatory drug," and its use can only produce hallucinations. This is just the opposite of the purpose of Buddhist mind-training, or the objectives of meditation, and can only bring evil effects to the addict. It is a gateway to delusion, which is one of the three roots of evil the true Buddhist seeks to overcome. It is also one of the forbidden things of

the fifth precept, which proscribes the taking of intoxicants and harmful drugs.

The eighth step is the development of mental concentration up to the degree of the meditative absorption, which is not pertinent to our present consideration of mindfulness in regard to our relationship and obligations to others.

Now, if we have developed any such mindfulness, not only have we to some extent become masters of our own mind, but there has been an awakening of our understanding of the problems that we as individuals and the world of today are facing. It is such mental training that enables one to set aside the propaganda of nationalism or expediency, and penetrate to the root cause of the unrest and distress that is so prevalent. Many today are acutely conscious of the immediate circumstances that are causing their distress, and of these some are rebelling against them, whether they be famine, armed conflict, racial discrimination, the uncertainty of the future, poverty, or just sheer boredom from a surfeit of ease and luxury, but few there are who can penetrate to the basic causes for the existing conditions.

Earlier we referred to the function of mindfulness in recognising the three roots of evil—greed, hatred, and delusion—and on a world basis these apply just as

equally as on a personal basis, so also does craving as a source of widespread dukkha, for world politics and national interests are but the sum total of the characteristics of the individuals holding the powers of government, and moulding the destinies of nations. In view of this it becomes obvious that we must first develop and train our minds, and then use them, if we are going to be of any real service to our fellow men. We must eradicate greed, with its selfishness, copiousness, and lack of generosity; we must eliminate hatred, with its anger, malice, strife, racial prejudices, resentment and revenge; we must wipe away the clouds of delusion that give rise to fear and intolerance, craving for sensual pleasures, and a continuance of the status quo. In their place we must develop unselfishness and generosity, loving kindness, tolerance and understanding, patience, and equanimity, and so fit us for the task of changing national and international conditions to a sum total of these beneficent characteristics.

Such is our aim and aspiration as Buddhists. The culmination will depend on the effort put forth as mindfulness reveals the cause and cure of dukkha.

A Businessman's Dhamma

by Reg McAuliffe

We may begin with two statements which many of us know to be based on experience:

1. The Dhamma, to the extent to which we have applied it in our ordinary life, works. It may reasonably be inferred that the part still to be applied will also work.
2. In the presence of mindfulness, is inoperative. Even when mindfulness is imperfect, dukkha loses much of its sting.

Our topic is "Business Man's Dhamma" rather than the Dhamma in ordinary life. Business life, as I see it, has the benevolent and malevolent aspects with which we are familiar. In its benevolent aspect it may provide an interesting and rewarding way of satisfying human needs and in its malevolent aspect it sometimes is as red in tooth and claw as nature herself. How mindful must one be to remain detached in such surroundings?

Would it not be better to practise the Dhamma in one's spare time in the hope that it might have some beneficial effect on one's business life, but otherwise carry on business as before? The answer I get is that there is no choice: the path has been chosen and must be trodden. Clearly one cannot say that one will tread the path consistently and without faltering right to the goal. One can only tread it in each moment which constitutes the present.

I am extremely grateful to a member of the Buddhist Society for valuable advice which he gave me at the Summer School a few years ago. In substance, his advice was to start in a very simple way on very simple activities. One can be mindful from the time of getting up in the morning, through one's morning meditation until the time of getting into the car to drive to the office. Then it all stops. We get the familiar frustration from traffic hold-ups and from cars cutting in and, to make matters worse, our attention is diverted by thoughts about the job, by imaginary situations and imaginary meetings. Given mindfulness, however, car-driving can be restful, relatively safe and, if not a form of meditation, at least a revealing exercise.

In taking up this advice I found it relatively easy, after some practice, to observe the road about 70 to 100 yards ahead in a general and relaxed sort of way,

without bothering to focus on anything in particular. In this condition, one's angle of vision is wider, with no noticeable loss of clarity, and one adjusts oneself to the general flow of traffic and notices deviations from it without apparent effort. Given mere attentiveness, it is almost as if the car drives itself: gears change as they should and the brakes come on at the proper time. The experience and the proof were good enough for me.

Driving back from the office is of the same pattern. Ordinarily one would continue conversations started in the office and wrestle with problems out of time and place. Given mindfulness, such irrelevances do not arise as distractions, but only as external phenomena, barely emerging.

So much for getting to and from the office. There remains the eight to ten hours each day of the mental push-pull which forms a large part of business activity. Clearly, mindfulness can be maintained in a simple mental activity, in the same way as it can in a simple physical activity, such as sawing a log of wood. But how can we apply mindfulness to complex situations in which a problem has to be resolved urgently in the place of some factors which are either unknown or imperfectly evaluated? How can mindfulness be applied when an urgent job has to be dropped half-way because some more urgent work has suddenly arisen? What happens when someone

starts a course of action which will cut right across the policy decision which one is following? What about a case in which one is calm and mindful and, perhaps because of one's calmness, the workload piles up? Is mindfulness possible or even appropriate in such circumstances?

I do not know the answer to all of these questions. I can only say that such experience as I have had over the past few years in applying mindfulness to business situations shows that it is possible and progressively successful. In my case, the initial step was the hardest, which perhaps is justification enough for starting on simple activities. Moreover, again in my personal experience, when mindfulness is functioning as it should, it is effortless.

In applying mindfulness to business activities, I came upon a number of things which I call "discoveries." Perhaps these things are merely statements of the obvious.

The first discovery was that Dhamma is life and business life is part of it. The alternative was seen to be absurd and the absurdity could be demonstrated, if that were necessary, by trying to pour a quart into a pint pot. This discovery brought about a re-orientation to the job.

Having previously seen that "things" more deeply

considered appear as functions, and functions more deeply considered change to a nameless something, I then stumbled upon the second "discovery" which was that complex things are merely simple things arranged in a special way and moving in a certain pattern in a certain direction. There are many cases in which one can deal with simple things one after the other when it would have been impossible to deal with the apparent complex of which they are the constituents.

The third "discovery" was concerned with some of the characteristics of change. It came to me that change was concerned with motion, either in the rate of flow or in the direction of flow. There could not be a change from motion to stopping (because no stopping could be observed), but there could be and often is a reversal in the direction of the main stream of events. Now it appeared that dukkha arose at the point of change (if there were personal resistance to it), and vanished if there were adaptation to the new flow, and increased if there were not.

The fourth "discovery" was to me the most surprising of all, namely that there had been no discovery but merely an expression, in imperfect terms, of what had always been known.

I do not know whether these things are true in any

real sense. They are true in the sense that they have worked in my case and seem to stem naturally from my present state of development, however low that may be. Once out of the primary school, the results of lessons may be expressed in more appropriate language.

On reflection, “uncovering” may be a better word than “discovery.” When one takes off the eiderdown from the bed, one is not surprised to see the bed uncovered. Perhaps our own protective layers are removed less frequently which, in a way, is the only surprising thing about it.

Table of Contents