PREFACE

In the earliest form of the teaching, as presented by the Pēñi Canon, no essential difference divides the goal attained by the Buddha himself from that realized by his disciples. For both the goal is the same, Nibbēna.

The differences between the Buddha and his disciples concern, first, the temporal sequence of their attainment and, second, the personal qualities which they acquire through their realization of the goal. In terms of temporal sequence, the Buddha is the discoverer of the path to Nibbēna while his disciples are those who tread the path under his guidance and thereby gain the truth.

In terms of personal qualities, the Buddha, as the founder of the Sēsana, the teaching, possesses a vast array of skills and modes of knowledge that are not fully shared by his disciples. Those who accept the Buddha as teacher and attempt to follow his path are his Sēvakas, his disciples. The category of discipleship cuts across the conventional distinction between the monastic order and the lay community and thus embraces the traditional “four assemblies” Buddhist followers: bhikkhus and bhikkhunē (monks and nuns) and upēsakas and upēsikās (laymen and laywomen).

On the other hand, the disciples of the Buddha can also be divided into two types of disciples: the ordinary disciples (Puthu-jjanas) and the noble disciples (Ariyēs). Among them, The class of ordinary disciples, which is by far the more numerous of the two, consists of those who are still technically classed as worldlings or
commoners (*Puthujjanas*) Such disciples may have sincerely gone for refuge to the Three Jewels and may be fully devoted to the practice of the Dhamma, but despite their earnestness they have not yet reached the plane where liberation is irrevocably assured. They have not yet seen the Dhamma for themselves, nor eliminated the mental fetters, nor entered irreversibly upon the path to final emancipation. Their present mode of practice is preparatory in character: it is intended to bring their spiritual faculties to maturity so that, in due course, they may enter upon the supemandane path. Until that experience dawns, however, they must wander on through the round of rebirths, uncertain of their future destination, still liable to moral lapses and even to rebirth in the lower realms.

In contrast to this class stands the class of noble disciples, the *ariyasEvaka*. These disciples have surmounted the plane of the worldlings, have arrived at the stage of irreversibility, and are assured of reaching the final goal in a maximum of seven more births. What has raised them from the status of a worldling to the plane of spiritual nobility is a radical transformation that has occurred at the very base of the mind. This transformation may be viewed from two complementary perspectives, one cognitive, the other psychological. The suttas refer to the cognitive aspect as the gaining of the vision of the Dhamma (*dhammacakkhu-paññābha*) and the breakthrough to the Dhamma (*dhammābhisamaya*). Such an event, altering one’s destiny for all time, generally takes place after the disciple has fulfilled the preliminary requisites of the training and has been engaged in the
practice of insight meditation \((\text{vipassan\-'bh\-van\-})\). As deepening insights into the true nature of phenomena bring to maturity the faculty of wisdom \((\text{pa\-\-\-})\), at a certain point, when all conditions ripe, the mists of ignorance momentarily disperse, affording the disciple an immediate glimpse of the inconditioned element, the Deathless, which is the precondition and final term of the whole process of liberation.

When this vision dawns the disciple becomes a true tier to the Buddha's message. The texts describe such a disciples as "one who has seen the Dhamma, reached the Dhamma, understood the Dhamma, fathomed the Dhamma, who has overcome all doubt and perplexity, and become self-sufficient in the Master’s teaching." Even though the vision may still be clouded and imperfect, the disciples has won access to the ultimate truth and it is only a matter of time until, by diligent practice, he or she brings this vision to its culmination in enlightenment \((\text{sambodhi}\)\), the complete experiential understanding of the Four Noble Truths.

The other aspect of the transformation which the disciple undergoes pertains to the constitution of the psyche. It consists in the permanent elimination of certain unwholesome mental dispositions called defilements \((\text{kilesas}\)\). For purposes of exposition, the defilements are usually classified into a set of ten fetters \((\text{sa\-\-\-\-j\-nas}\)\), called thus because they hold beings in bondage to the round of rebirths. From the suttas it appears that in exceptional cases a disciple with a high degree of wisdom from previous lives can
cut off all ten fetters at a single stroke, thereby advancing in one leap from the stage of a worldling to that of an arahant, a fully liberated one. The more typical process of attainment, however, is a calibrated one whereby the fetters are cut off sequentially, in discrete clusters, on four different occasions of awakening. This results in a fourfold gradation among the noble disciples, with each major stage subdivided in turn into two phases: a phase of the path (magga), when the disciple is practicing for the elimination of the particular cluster of fetters; and a phase of the fruit (phala), when the breakthrough is complete and the fetters have been destroyed. This subdivision explains the classical formula of the Aruya Sangha as made up of four pairs and eight types of noble persons (yadidaṅ cattēri purisayugēni aÔÔhapurisapuggala esa bhagavato sÈvakasa~gho).

The first stage of awakening is called stream-entry (SotÈpatti), because it is with this attainment that the disciple can properly be said to have entered “the stream of the Dhamma” (dhammasota), i.e., the Noble Eightfold Path that leads irreversibly to NibbÈna. Stream-entry is won with the first arising of the vision of the Dhamma and is marked by the eradication of the coarsest three fetters: personality view (sakkÈyadiÔÔhi), the view of a substantial self within the empirical person; doubt in the Buddha and his teaching; and wrong grasp of rules and vows (sÈlabbataparÈmÈsa), the belief that mere external observances (including religious rituals and penitential forms of asceticism) can lead to salvation. With the cutting
off of these three fetters the stream-enterer is freed from the prospect of rebirth in the plane of misery (apÊyabh|mî), the three lower reams of the hells, the animal kingdom, and the sphere of spirits or “hungry ghosts.” Such a one is certain to attain final liberation in at most seven more lifetimes passed either in the human world or in the heavens.

The next major stage of awakening is that of the once-returner (SakadÈgÈmi), who will be reborn only one more time in the human realm or in the sense-sphere heavens and thee reach the ultimate goal. The path of once-returning does not eradicate any fetters beyond those already eliminated by the path of stream-entry. It does, however attenuate the three root defilements- greed, hatred and delusion- so that they arise only sporadically and then only in a mild degree.

The third path, that of non-returner (AnÈgÈmi), cuts off two deep roots of emotional turbulence within the psyche: the defilements of sensual lust and ill will, the fourth and fifth fetters, which are removed in all their manifold guises, even the subtlest. Because these two fetters are the principal ties that keep living beings bound to the sense-desire realm, the non-returner, as the name implies, never returns to this realm. Rather, such a one is spontaneously reborn in one of the exalted form-realm heavens called the Pure Abodes (suddhÈvÈsa), accessible only to non-returners, and there attains final NibbÈna without ever coming back to this world.
The fourth and final stage of noble discipleship is that of arahantship (*arahatta*), which is attained by the elimination of the five subtle fetters that remain unabandoned even in the non-returner: desire for existence in the form realm and formless realm, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance. As ignorance is the most deeply grounded of all the defilements, when the path of arahantship arises fully fathoming the Four Noble Truths, ignorance collapse, bringing all the other residual defilements along with it. The mind then enters upon “the taintless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, attained by the destruction of the taints” – the state that the Buddha calls the unsurpassed consummation of the holy life.

The arahant is the fully accomplished disciple of early Buddhism, the perfect model for the entire Buddhist community. Even the Buddha himself, with respect to his libration, is described as an arahant, and he declared the arhants to be his equals in regard to the destruction of defilements. For the arahant there is no further task to be achieved and no falling away from what has been achieved. He or she has completed the development of the noble path, has fully understood the true nature of existence, and has eradicated all the mind’s bonds and fetters. For the duration of life the arahant abides in unruffled peace, in the experiential realization of Nibbãna, with a mind stainless and secure. Then, with the breakup of the body at the end of the life spa, he or she reaches the end of the entire process of re-becoming. For the arahant death is not the passageway to a new rebirth, as it is for all others, but the doorway to the unconditioned
state itself, the Nibbëna-element without residue of conditioned existence (anupÈdisesa-nibbÈnadhÈtu). This is the true cessation of suffering to which the Buddha’s Teaching points, the final termination of the beginningless round of birth and death.

In the present research, a critical study of the Noble Disciples of the Buddha is well and systematically organized in the following chapters.

Chapter one is a collection of the meaning of Ariya (noble), the pypes of Noble disciples of the Buddha, the period of the fulfilling of the PÈramÊ (perfections) to be a Noble one which based on TheravÈda PÈÄi TipiÔaka Literatures, such as Vinaya-PiÔaka, Suttanta-PiÔaka and Abhidhamma-PiÔaka.

Chapter two is a collection of biographical profiles of SÈriputta and MahÈmoggallÊ. It discusses how they search for the deathless Dhamma, how they get it, how they enter the Order of Sangha, how they got the title of the AggamahÈsÈvaka and how they devoted their lives for the Buddha’s SÈsasa in detail.

The third chapter deals with the accounts of the Venerable Anuruddha and the Venerable MahÈkaccÈna. Anuruddha was the foremost in divine eye. He could view 1,000 world systems. The Venerable MahÈkaccÈyana was foremost in explaining in detail the profound sayings of the Buddha to help novices, monks and lay disciples who were not spiritual mature. In this chapter, how they
devoted their lives for the welfare of the people will be discussed in detail.

**The fourth chapter** discusses the accounts of KemÈ TherÊ, BaddÈ KuÛÉalakesÈ TherÊ and PaÔÈcÈrÈ TherÊ. Among the Buddha’s nuns disciples KemÈ TherÊ was the foremost in wisdom. BaddÈ KuÛÉalakesÈ TherÊ was the foremost of the bhikkhunÈs with respect to quickness of understanding (*khippÈbhiÛÒa*). Among the Buddha’s bhikkhunÈs PaÔÈcÈrÈ TherÊ was the foremost in preserving Vinaya. In this chapter, their biographies will be researched in detail basing on PÈli, commentaries, and sub-commentaries.

**The fifth chapter** mentions the accounts of the Noble lay persons such as AnÈthapiÔÈika, and VisÈkhÈ who supported the Buddha’s SÈsana. Among the Buddha’s lay men AnÈthapiÔÈika was the most generous benefactor of the Buddha’s SÈsana and among the Buddha’s lay women VisÈkhÈ was the most generous benefactor of the Buddha’s SÈsana. It discusses the accounts of the noble lay disciples in detail. And **Chapter-Six** deals with **Conclusion** of all previous chapters.