

### The 4 secrets (Part 1 of 4)

Understanding impermanence is the start of the path  
For a Dhamma future to be possible  
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The Buddha taught us these 4 “**secrets**” (so to speak):

- (1) **The truth:** impermanence, all our right understanding starts here.
- (2) **The teacher:** the Buddha, one awakened, only one, not two or more.
- (3) **The teaching:** the teaching is the way to awakening.
- (4) **The awakening:** we all awake in the same way.

These are called “secret” because they are so easy to know but eludes the great minds that try to steal good things and treat them as their “Things.” They cannot really see even the simplest of truths that are also the most universal and liberating.

They are called “secret” because things are secret to us so long as we do not really understand them as they really are. Without true understanding we are blind to reality.

The most important meaning of “secret” (*raho*) is that these are things which only we can know **for** ourself **by** ourself **with** ourself alone.

There are 3 kinds of **aloneness**:

(1) The 1<sup>st</sup> is when we are in **retreat**, meditating by ourself. We may be alone by ourself in a quiet place. Or in some kind of meditation place, peaceful and ideal.

(2) The 2<sup>nd</sup> is when our **mind** is at peace. We may be anywhere, even in a crowd. For example, we are caught in a panicking crowd led by a raving one-eyed leader and rushing headlong through the jungle of life for the deep ocean or sheer cliff of disaster and death. For ourself, we know just how to be calm and **stop** right where we are and see things just as they are. We also teach others how to stay safe from the crowd.

(3) The 3<sup>rd</sup> kind of aloneness is when our **heart** has been touched by the Dhamma, and is always at peace, like in the eye of a storm. Toil and trouble storm all round us, but we are always at peace, in a big safe ship in a stormy sea. People are struggling in the choppy waters, and we help them. We throw life-lines, life-buoys and life-rafts to help them. We float light-buoys in the troubled waters.

#### Secret no. 1: **Impermanence**

All the 4 sights that the young Siddhattha saw are aspects of **impermanence**: we are born (we must die), we have a body (we will fall sick), we have life (it will end). When we understand this, we will no more be intoxicated by the false views about them. We value youth, health and life as means of growing with wisdom, joy and freedom.

**Religions** that do not know the Buddha or try to belittle him, make false promises of some kind of immortal Soul, eternal Heaven, almighty God, transcendental Bodhisattva or cosmic Buddha. If we see them as symbols of the human struggle to make sense of themselves, this

may help. But a carpenter who worships his hammer, saw, chisel and tools will not be a true carpenter. Even when we bow deeply and beseech humbly a fire extinguisher to put out the fire, it never can! We must ourselves work the extinguisher, directing it at the fire!

The best way to live in this world is to see its impermanence and accept it. It's like living in the kingdom of the blind where there are no lights at all. We may claim that in the kingdom of the blind the "One-eyed" is King. But when darkness falls, and there is no light at all, this One-eyed King is unable to see his way around! But the blind know their way around very well.

We must be wary not to end up as "One-eyed" Buddhists like our One-eyed Teachers who cannot find their way around in the dark. They promise to "transfer" merit, or that we can go to Paradise just by calling our Buddha's name, and claim that they or their Lords are more "enlightened" than the Buddha. They are all lost in the darkness of impermanence—they do not see impermanence. None are so blind as those who see not.

When we understand and accept the truth and reality of **impermanence**, the world lights up before us. We get used to the darkness and there is a bright full moon in a cloudless sky. We can see quite clearly a landscape that we are already very familiar with in the day. As in the day, so in the night, we find our way happily around.

In such a beautiful place, we would rather sit peacefully in a safe comfortable place and meditate alone like the Buddha. Then, our own light will brighten all around us for the benefit of others. It all begins with seeing impermanence, and accepting it fully with love.

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha's Example and Teachings]

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