

# Essentials of Buddhism

Based on textual excerpts  
From the teachings of  
U Ba Khin and Webu Sayadaw

**First comes an opening Lecture on:**

## The Essentials of Buddha Dhamma in Meditative Practice

by

**Sayagyi Thray Sithu U Ba Khin**

With an Essay on U Ba Khin

by

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Thus begin the instructions:

*Anicca, dukkha, anattá*—Impermanence, Suffering and Egolessness—are the three essential characteristics of things in the Teaching of the Buddha. If you know *anicca* correctly, you will know *dukkha* as its corollary and *anattá* as ultimate truth. It takes time to understand the three together.

Impermanence (*anicca*) is, of course, the essential fact which must be first experienced and understood by practice. Mere book-knowledge of the Buddha-Dhamma will not be enough for the correct understanding of *anicca* because the experiential aspect will be missing.

It is only through experiential understanding of the nature of *anicca* as an ever-changing process within you that you can understand *anicca* in the way the

Buddha would like you to understand it. As in the days of the Buddha, so too now, this understanding of anicca can be developed by persons who have no book-knowledge whatsoever of Buddhism.

To understand Impermanence (*anicca*) one must follow strictly and diligently the Eightfold Noble Path, which is divided into the three groups of *sìla*, *samádhi* and *paññá*—Morality, Concentration and Wisdom.

Sìla, or virtuous living, is the basis for samádhi, control of the mind, leading to one-pointedness. It is only when samádhi is good that one can develop paññá. Therefore, sìla and samádhi are the prerequisites for paññá. By paññá is meant the understanding of anicca, dukkha and anattá through the practice of vipassaná, i.e., insight meditation.

Whether a Buddha has arisen or not the practice of sìla and samádhi may be present in the human world. They are, in fact, the common denominators of all religious faiths. They are not, however,

sufficient means for the goal of Buddhism—the complete end of suffering.

In his search for the end of suffering, Prince Siddhattha, the future Buddha, found this out and worked his way through to find the path which would lead to the end of suffering. After solid work for six years, he found the way out, became completely enlightened, and *then* taught men and gods to follow the Path which would lead them to the end of suffering.

In this connection we should understand that each action—whether by deed, word or thought—leaves behind an active force called "saòkhára" (or "kamma" in popular terminology), which goes to the credit or debit account of the individual, according to whether the action is good or bad.

There is, therefore, an accumulation of saòkhára (or kamma) with everyone, which functions as the supply-source of energy to sustain life, which is inevitably followed by suffering and death.

It is by the development of the power inherent in the understanding of anicca, dukkha and anattá, that one is able to rid oneself of the saòkhára accumulated in one's own personal account. This process begins with the correct understanding of anicca, while further accumulations of fresh actions and the reduction of the supply of energy to sustain life are taking place simultaneously, from moment to moment and from day to day.

It is, therefore, a matter of a whole lifetime or more to get rid of all one's saòkhára. He who has rid himself of all saòkhára comes to the end of suffering, for then no saòkhára remains to give the necessary energy to sustain him in any form of life.

On the termination of their lives the perfected saints, i.e., the Buddhas and arahants, pass into *parinibbána*, reaching the end of suffering. For us today who take to vipassaná meditation, it would suffice if we can understand anicca well enough to reach the first stage of an Ariya (a Noble person),

that is, a Sotápanna or stream-enterer, who will not take more than seven lives to come to the end of suffering.

The fact of anicca, which opens the door to the understanding of dukkha and anattá and eventually to the end of suffering, can be encountered in its full significance only through the Teachings of a Buddha, for so long as that Teaching relating to the Eightfold Noble Path and the Thirty-Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiyá dhammá*) remains intact and available to the aspirant.

For progress in vipassana meditation, a student must keep knowing anicca as continuously as possible. The Buddha's advice to monks is that they should try to maintain the awareness of anicca, dukkha or anattá in all postures, whether sitting, standing, walking or lying down.

Continuous awareness of anicca and so of dukkha and anattá, is the secret of success. The last words of the Buddha just before He breathed His last and

passed away into Maha-parinibbána were: "Decay (or anicca) is inherent in all component things. Work out your own salvation with diligence." This is in fact the essence of all His teachings during the forty-five years of His ministry. If you will keep up the awareness of the anicca that is inherent in all component things, you are sure to reach the goal in the course of time.

As you develop in the understanding of anicca, your insight into "What is true of nature" will become greater and greater, so much so that eventually you will have no doubt whatsoever of the three characteristics of anicca, dukkha and anattá. It is then only that you will be in a position to go ahead for the goal in view. Now that you know anicca as the first essential factor, you would try to understand what anicca is with real clarity as extensively as possible so as not to get confused in the course of practice or discussion.

The real meaning of anicca is that Impermanence or Decay is the inherent nature of everything that

exists in the Universe—whether animate or inanimate.

The Buddha taught His disciples that everything that exists at the material level is composed of "*kalápas*." Kalápas are material units very much smaller than atoms, which die out immediately after they come into being.

Each kalápa is a mass formed of the eight basic constituents of matter, the solid, liquid, calorific and oscillatory, together with color, smell, taste, and nutriment.

The first four are called primary qualities, and are predominant in a kalápa. The other four are subsidiaries, dependent upon and springing from the former. A kalápa is the minutest particle in the physical plane—still beyond the range of science today. It is only when the eight basic material constituents unite together that the kalápa is formed. In other words, the momentary collocation of these eight basic elements of behavior makes a man just

for that moment, which in Buddhism is known as a kalápa.

The life span of a kalápa is termed a moment, and a trillion such moments are said to elapse during the wink of a man's eye. These kalápas are all in a state of perpetual change or flux. To a developed student in vipassaná meditation they can be felt as a stream of energy.

The human body is not, as it may appear, a solid stable entity, but a continuum of matter (*rúpa*) co-existing with mentality (*náma*). To know that our very body is tiny kalápas all in a state of change is to know the true nature of change or decay.

This change or decay (*anicca*) occasioned by the continual breakdown and replacement of kalápas, all in a state of combustion, must necessarily be identified as dukkha, the truth of suffering.

It is only when you experience impermanence (*anicca*) as suffering (*dukkha*) that you come to the

realization of the truth of suffering, the first of the Four Noble Truths basic to the doctrine of the Buddha. Why? Because when you realize the subtle nature of dukkha from which you cannot escape for a moment, you become truly afraid of, disgusted with, and disinclined towards your very existence as mentality-materiality (*námarúpa*), and look for a way of escape to a state beyond dukkha, and so to Nibbána, the end of suffering.

What that end of suffering is like, you will be able to taste, even as a human being, when you reach the level of sotápanna, a stream-enterer, and develop well enough by practice to attain to the unconditioned state of Nibbána, the peace within. But even in terms of everyday, ordinary life, no sooner than you are able to keep up the awareness of anicca in practice will you know for yourself that a change is taking place in you for the better, both physically and mentally.

Before entering upon the practice of vipassaná meditation, that is, after samádhi has been

developed to a proper level, a student should acquaint himself with the theoretical knowledge of material and mental properties, i.e., of rúpa and náma.

For in vipassaná meditation one contemplates not only the changing nature of matter, but also the changing nature of mentality, of the thought-elements of attention directed towards the process of change going on within matter.

At times attention will be focused on the impermanence of the material side of existence, i.e. upon anicca in regard to rúpa; and, at other times, on the impermanence of the thought-elements or mental side, i.e., upon anicca in regard to náma.

When one is contemplating the impermanence of matter, one realizes also that the thought-elements simultaneous with that awareness are also in a state of transition or change. In this case one will be knowing anicca in regard to both rúpa and náma together.

All I have said so far relates to the understanding of anicca through bodily feelings of the process of change of rúpa or matter, and also of thought-elements depending upon such changing processes. You should know that anicca can also be understood through other types of feeling as well. Anicca can be contemplated through feeling:

- (i) by contact of visible form with the sense organ of the eye;
- (ii) by contact of sound with the sense organ of the ear;
- (iii) by contact of smell with the sense organ of the nose;
- (iv) by contact of taste with the sense organ of the tongue;
- (v) by contact of touch with the sense organ of the body
- (vi) by contact of mental objects with the sense organ of the mind.

Once can thus develop the understanding of anicca through any of six sense organs. In practice, however, we have found that of all the types of feeling, the feeling by contact of touch with the component parts of the body in a process of change covers the widest area for introspective meditation.

Not only that, the feelings by contact of touch (by way of friction, radiation and vibration of the kalápas within) with the component parts of the body is more evident than other types of feeling and, therefore, a beginner in vipassaná meditation can come to the understanding of anicca more easily through bodily feelings of the change of rúpa or matter.

This is the main reason why we have chosen bodily feeling as a medium for quick understanding of anicca. It is open to anyone to try other means, but my suggestion is that one should be well established in the understanding of anicca through bodily feeling before any attempt is made through other types of feeling.

There are ten levels of knowledge in vipassaná, namely:

- (i) *Sammasana*: theoretical appreciation of anicca, dukkha and anattá by close observation and analysis,
- (ii) *Udayabbaya*: knowledge of the arising and dissolution of rúpa and náma by direct observation.
- (iii) *Bhaòga*: knowledge of the rapidly changing nature of rúpa and náma as a swift current or stream of energy; in particular, clear awareness of the phase of dissolution,
- (iv) *Bhaya*: knowledge that this very existence is dreadful,
- (v) *Ádìnava*: knowledge that this very existence is full of evils,
- (vi) *Nibbidá*: knowledge that this very existence is disgusting,
- (vii) *Muñcitukamyatá*: knowledge of the urgent need and wish to escape from this very existence,

- (viii) *Patisaòkhá*: knowledge that the time has come to work for full realization of deliverance, with anicca as the base,
- (ix) *Saòkharupekkhá*: knowledge that the stage is now set to get detached from all conditioned phenomena (*saòkhára*) and to break away from egocentricity,
- (x) *Anuloma*: knowledge that would accelerate the attempt to reach the goal.

These are the levels of attainment which one goes through during the course of vipassaná meditation; in the case of those who reach the goal in a short time, they can be known only in retrospect. Along with one's progress in understanding anicca, one may reach these levels of attainment, subject, however, to adjustments or help at certain levels by a competent teacher. One should avoid looking forward to such attainments in anticipation, as this will distract from the continuity of awareness of anicca, which alone can and will give the desired reward.

Let me now deal with vipassaná meditation from the point of view of a householder in everyday life and explain the benefit one can derive from it—here and now—in this very lifetime.

The initial object of vipassaná meditation is to activate the experience of anicca in oneself and to eventually reach a state of inner and outer calmness and balance. This is achieved when one becomes engrossed in the feeling of anicca within.

The world is now facing serious problems which threaten all mankind. It is just the right time for everyone to take to vipassaná meditation and learn how to find a deep pool of quiet in the midst of all that is happening today. Anicca is inside of everybody. It is within reach of everybody. Just a look into oneself and there it is—anicca to be experienced. When one can feel anicca, when one can experience anicca, and when one can become engrossed in anicca, one can, at will, cut oneself off from the world of ideation outside. Anicca is, for the householder, the gem of life which he will

treasure to create a reservoir of calm and balanced energy for his own well-being and for the welfare of the society.

The experience of anicca, when properly developed, strikes at the root of one's physical and mental ills and removes gradually whatever is bad in him, i.e. the causes of such physical and mental ills.

This experience is not reserved for men who have renounced the world for the homeless life. It is for the householder as well. In spite of drawbacks which make a householder restless in these days, a competent teacher or guide can help a student to get the experience of anicca activated in a comparatively short time.

Once he has got it activated, all that is necessary is for him to try and preserve it; but he must make it a point, as soon as time or opportunity presents itself for further progress, to work for the stage of *bhavañña*—the third level of knowledge in vipassanā. If he reaches this level, there will be little

or no problem because he should then be able to experience anicca without much ado and almost automatically.

In this case anicca will become his base, to which all his physical and mental activities return as soon as the domestic needs of daily life for such activities are over.

However, there is likely to be some difficulty for one who has not reached the stage of *bhaòga*. It will be just like a tug-of-war for him between anicca within, and physical and mental activities outside. So it would be wise for him to follow the motto of work while you work, play while you play.

There is no need for him to be activating the experience of anicca all the time. It should suffice if this could be confined to a regular period, or periods, set apart in the day or night for the purpose. During this time, at least, an attempt must be made to keep the attention focused inside the body, with awareness devoted exclusively to anicca; that is to

say, his awareness of anicca should go on from moment to moment so continuously as not to allow for the interpolation of any discursive or distracting thoughts which are definitely detrimental to progress.

In case this is not possible, he will have to go back to respiration-mindfulness, because samádhi is the key to the contemplation of anicca. To get good samádhi, sîla (morality) has to be perfect, since samádhi is build upon sîla. For a good experience of anicca, samádhi must be good. If samádhi is excellent, awareness of anicca will also become excellent.

There is no special technique for activating the experience of anicca other than the use of the mind, adjusted to a perfect state of balance, and attention projected upon the object of meditation. In vipassaná the object of meditation is anicca, and therefore in the case of those used to focusing their attention on bodily feelings, they can feel anicca directly. In experiencing anicca in relation to the

body, it should first be in the area where one can easily get his attention engrossed, changing the area of attention from place to place, from head to feet and from feet to head, at times probing into the interior. At this stage, it must clearly be understood that no attention is to be paid to the anatomy of the body, but to the formations of matter- the kalápas— and the nature of their constant change.

If these instructions are observed, there will surely be progress, but the progress depends also on Párami (i.e. on one's dispositions for certain spiritual qualities) and the devotion of the individual to the work of meditation.

If he attains high levels of knowledge, his power to understand the three characteristics of anicca, dukkha and anattá will increase and he will accordingly come nearer and nearer the goal of the Ariya or noble saint, which every householder should keep in view.

This is the age of science. Man of today has no Utopia. He will not accept anything unless the results are good, concrete, vivid, personal, and here-and-now.

When the Buddha was alive, He said to the Kálámas: “Now look, you Kálámas. Be not misled by report or tradition or hearsay. Be not misled by proficiency in the scriptural collections, or by reasoning or logic or reflection on and approval of some theory, or because some view conforms to one's inclinations, or out of respect for the prestige of a teacher. But when you know for yourselves: these things are unwholesome, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the wise, these things when practiced and observed, conduce to loss and sorrow—then you reject them. But if at any time you know for yourselves: these things are wholesome, these things are blameless, these things are praised by the intelligent; these things, when practiced and observed, conduce to welfare and happiness, then, Kálámas, do ye, having practised them, abide.”

The time-clock of vipassaná has now struck—that is, for the revival of Buddha-Dhamma vipassaná in practice. We have no doubt whatsoever that definite results would accrue to those who would with an open mind sincerely undergo a course of training under a competent teacher—I mean results which will be accepted as good, concrete, vivid, personal, here-and-now, results which will keep them in good stead and in a state of well-being and happiness for the rest of their lives.

May all beings be happy and may peace prevail in the world.

## **U Ba Khin: An Appreciation**

by

**Eric Lerner**

Over the centuries Theraváda Buddhist teachings have been preserved by and large in a monastic

tradition. The requisite for the ‘true practice’ has been the renunciation of worldly existence for a life behind walls or in the forest. Householders were left with the observances of morality, almsgiving, and worship to accrue merit for future lives when they could actually embark on the formal path to liberation. As the sūtras themselves reveal, however, this was not the case at all when the Buddha was alive and preaching. Vast numbers of householders received the teaching and the practice as well, and attained high levels of spiritual development.

In the past few decades, in the Theravada Buddhist countries there has been a general revival of interest in insight meditation among the robed Sangha, and with it a spreading of the practice outside the monastery walls. This has in a sense revived the whole outlook toward meditation, practicalizing it, in a way, by focusing on two important aspects. First, how can a man who does not have his entire life to devote to silence and contemplation approach

meditation? And second, what role can the meditative discipline play in worldly life?

These problems were dealt with in great detail and with remarkable strength of imagination by one of the most important meditation masters of modern day Burma, Thray Sithu U Ba Khin. He was well known within his country as an important Government servant, for many years the Accountant General of the Union of Burma as well as the chairman of a number of important boards and commissions. At one time he held four such posts simultaneously, was the father of six children and found the time to teach meditation at the International Meditation Center in Rangoon, which was established under his guidance in the early 1950s.

The unique characteristics of his spiritual teaching stem from his situation as a lay meditation master in an orthodox Buddhist country. It was not appropriate for him to instruct monks, so all of his practice was geared specifically to lay people. He

developed a powerfully direct approach to vipassaná meditation that could be undertaken in a short period of intensive practice and continued as part of house-holding life.

His method has been of great importance in the transmission of the Dhamma to the West, because in his twenty five years at the Center he instructed scores of foreign visitors who needed no closer acquaintance with Buddhism *per se* to quickly grasp this practice of insight.

Since U Ba Khin's demise in 1971, several of his commissioned disciples have carried on his work, both within and outside of Burma. Hundreds of Westerners have received the instruction from S.N. Goenka in India, Robert Hover and Ruth Denison in America and John Coleman in England. In addition, several of U Ba Khin's closest disciples still teach at the Center in Rangoon.

What is the goal of Insight Meditation? And does it differ in any way for the man whose whole life is

devoted to its practice and the man who earns a living and supports others? In the broadest sense there is no difference.

The end of suffering is the goal. The experience of Nibbánic Peace within, as U Ba Khin referred to it, is the aim of the practice; but also the end of suffering each moment; harmony among beings, the end of internal tension, the manifestation of loving-kindness, the ability to perform one's daily tasks free from anger, greed and anxiety. For the lay person and the monk, it is the same. The way to proceed, however, differs, at least at the outset.

U Ba Khin understood that unlike the monk, his students faced severe limitations of time to devote to their practice. Furthermore, they had to function in a completely uncontrolled environment generally hostile to proper moral conduct and good concentration, the requisites for insight.

Thus he gave them a method that could withstand that pressure. In the short span of ten days, most of

his pupils could experience at least a glimpse of the reality within and continue expanding their awareness with two hours daily of formal meditation after they left the Center.

This technique has three distinctive qualities to it. First is its emphasis on the development of sufficient one-pointed concentration. Concerning this, U Ba Khin wrote:

‘*Samádhi* (concentration) is a way of training the mind to become tranquil, pure and strong and, therefore, forms the essence of religious life ... It is, in fact, the greatest common denominator of all religions.

Unless one can get the mind freed from the impurities and develop it to a state of purity, he can hardly identify himself with Brahma or God. Although different methods are used by people of different religions, the goal for the development of mind is the same, viz. a perfect state of physical and mental calm.

The student at the Center is helped to develop the power of concentration leading to one-pointedness, by encouraging him to focus his attention to a spot on the upper lip at the base of the nose, synchronizing the inward and outward motion of respiration with the silent awareness of in-breath and out-breath ...

In the *Ānāpānasati* meditation technique (i.e. that of respiration mindfulness), which is followed at the Center, one great advantage is that the respiration is not only natural, but also available at all times for the purpose of anchoring one's attention to it, to the exclusion of all other thoughts. With a determined effort to narrow down the range of thought waves, firstly, to the area around the nose with respiration mindfulness and gradually, with the wave length of respiration becoming shorter, to a spot on the upper lip with just the warmth of the breath, there is no reason why a good student of meditation should not be able to

secure the one-pointedness of mind in a few days of training.

*The Real Values of True Buddhist Meditation*, pp. 5-6.

The reason for the necessity of good concentration, he felt, was that with only a limited period of time available, one's mind had to have a degree of penetrating power to really experience the inner reality on more than a conceptual level. He departed from the most traditional monastic view that concentration had to be developed to very high states requiring great time and isolation. But neither did he agree with the approach that began with little specific concentration training. He was interested in a sufficient level for the work of real insight.

The second quality of his teaching was its focus on the characteristic of *anicca*, impermanence. The Buddha described reality as having three marks, or characteristics: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and the absence of a real “I” or self. In the practice of mindfulness, observance of just what is, focusing

the attention of these true marks of reality breaks down false view and weakens attachment. U Ba Khin taught that the most direct access to understanding the process of life was through awareness of impermanence, *anicca*. He felt that *anicca* is the most apparent and readily comprehensible of the three marks and that its understanding leads naturally to the others. So the observance of change, or the alteration of all phenomena at increasingly subtler levels, was the real object of his vipassaná technique.

The method itself was the systematic awareness of physical sensation in the body. As the Satipaṁphána Sutta of the Buddha makes clear, the process of life is identical in every aspect of the mind-body continuum. Choose whichever you like and observe it closely enough and all of reality unfolds. U Ba Khin found that the unfolding is most dramatic and rapid in the physical sensation within the body. His students were directed to place their concentrated attention on that and become sensitive to the process of change observable in the tactile reaction

of heat, cold tingling, pain, numbness, pressure or whatever was there. Simply observe the changing nature of the phenomenon within you, he taught.

Continued practice of the method, as he points out in the following articles, yields spiritual and worldly results as well. He maintained that a householder could enjoy the fruit of the Nibbānic experience in this life time. And he encouraged men not to be content with ritual practice of simple book knowledge of the teaching.

In addition, the practice, as his disciple S.N. Goenka terms it, is an art of living. So convinced was U Ba Khin of the power of this method for clearing the mind that he insisted that all of his employees in the Accounts Department take a course of meditation from him and that a portion of the office be set aside for a meditation space. Mr. Robert Hover recounts the story that his teacher told him. Sometimes U Ba Khin, attending particularly unfocused meetings of government with men of more biased minds, would in the midst of heated

argument rise from his chair and stand for some moments gazing out of the window before returning to the conference table. His colleagues thought he was watching the world outside.

In fact, U Ba Khin explained, he was busy within, re-establishing mindfulness to deal with the demands of life.

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**Next, come three lectures on the subject of  
What Buddhism Is**



This is the first of three lectures given by Sayagyi U Ba Khin 1951 to the Religion in Life Forum, in the Methodist English Church of Signal Pagoda Road, Rangoon.

## *Lecture No. 1 (September 23, 1951)*

I consider it a great privilege to be in your midst today and to have this opportunity of addressing you on the subject of *What Buddhism Is*.

At the outset, I must be very frank with you. I have not been to a university and I have no knowledge of science except as a man in the street. Nor am I a scholar in the theory of Buddhism with any knowledge of Pali, the language in which the Tipitakas (literally, the "Three Baskets" of Buddha-Dhamma) are maintained.

I may say, however, that I have read in Burmese to some extent the treatises on Buddhism by well-known and learned Buddhist monks. As my approach to Buddhism is more by practical than by theoretical means, I hope to be able to give you something of Buddhism which is not easily available elsewhere. I must admit, however, that for the time being I am just a student of practical Buddhism, an

experimentalist trying to learn through Buddhism the truth of the nature of forces.

As this has to be done as a householder and within a limited time available in between the multifarious duties of a responsible officer of Government, the progress is rather slow, and I do not claim for a moment that what I am going to say is absolutely correct. I may be right or wrong. But when I say a thing, I assure you that it is with a sincerity of purpose, with the best of intentions and with conviction.

The Lord Buddha said in the *Kalama Sutta*: [1]

"Do not believe in what you have heard; do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations; do not believe in anything because it is rumored and spoken by many; do not believe merely because a written statement of some old sage is produced; do not believe in conjectures; do not believe in that as truth to which you have

become attached from habit; do not believe merely the authority of your teachers and elders. After observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and gain of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."

Pray do not, therefore, believe me when I come to the philosophical issues until and unless you are convinced of what I say, either as a sequel to proper reasoning or by means of a practical approach.

- To abstain from evil,
- To do good,
- To purify the mind,
- These are the teachings of all the Buddhas.

*Dhammapada, verse 14*

This extract taken from the *Dhammapada* gives in brief the essence of Buddhism. It sounds simple, but is so difficult to practise. One cannot be a true Buddhist unless one puts the doctrine

of the Buddha into practice. The Buddha said:  
[2]

"You, to whom the truths I have perceived have been made known by me, make them truly your own, practise them, meditate upon them, spread them abroad: in order that the pure religion may last long and be perpetuated for the good and the gain and the well-being of gods and men."

Before I take up the teachings of the Buddha, which form the basic foundation of Buddhism, I propose to acquaint you, first of all, with the life story of Gotama Buddha.

For this purpose, I feel it is my duty to give you a background of certain Buddhist concepts which may be foreign to most of you. I propose, therefore, to give you a short descriptive explanation of such concepts in Buddhism as the Universe, the World-system, the planes of existence, etc.

These will, no doubt, give you some food for thought. I would, however, appeal to you to give

a patient hearing and to pass over these matters for the time being, i.e., until we come to the question time for discussion.

## **The Universe**

The Buddhist concept of the Universe may be summed up as follows: There is the *Okasa Loka* (the Universe of Space) which accommodates *Nama* and *Rupa* (Mind and Matter). In this mundane world, it is *Nama* and *Rupa* (Mind and Matter) which predominate under the influence of the law of Cause and Effect. Next is the *Sankhara Loka* (the Universe of Mental Forces), creative or created. This is a mental plane arising out of the creative energies of Mind through the medium of bodily actions, words and thoughts. The third and last is the *Satta Loka* (the Universe of Sentient Beings) visible or invisible, beings that are the products of these mental forces; we may rather call these three the "Three-in-One" universe, because each is inseparable from the others. They are, so to speak, interwoven and interpenetrating.

What will interest you most are the *Cakkavalas* or World-systems, each with its thirty-one planes of existence. Each World-system corresponds to the Human World with its solar system and other planes of existence. There are millions and millions of such World-systems; they are simply innumerable. The ten thousand World-systems closest to us are within the *Jati-khetta* (or the Field of Origin) of a Buddha. In fact, when the renowned Sutta (or discourse), the *Maha-Samaya* (meaning the "Great Occasion") was preached by the Buddha in the *Mahavana* (forest) near the town of *Kapilavatthu*, not only the *Brahmas* and *Devas* of our World-system but of all the ten thousand World-systems were present to listen to the teachings of the Buddha.[3]

The Lord Buddha can also send his thought-waves charged with boundless love and compassion to the sentient beings of a billion such World-systems within the *Ana-khetta* (the Field of Influence). The remainder of the

World- systems are in the *Visaya-khetta* (infinite space), beyond the reach of the Buddha's effective thought waves. You can very well imagine from these concepts of Buddhism the size of the Universe as a whole. The material insignificance of our World in the *Okasa Loka* (the Universe of Space) is simply terrifying. The Human World, as a whole, must be just a speck in space.

Now I will give you an idea of the thirty-one planes of existence in our World-system, which, of course, is the same as in any of the other World-systems. Broadly speaking, they are:

- v. **Arupa Loka** *The Immaterial Worlds of the Brahmas*
- vi. **Rupa Loka** *The Fine-material Worlds of the Brahmas*
- vii. **Kama Loka** *The Sensuous Worlds of Devas, mankind and lower beings.*

The *Arupa Loka* is composed of four *Brahma* Worlds of immaterial state, i.e., without *Rupa* or

Matter. The *Rupa* Loka is composed of sixteen *Brahma* Worlds of fine-material state. The *Kama Loka* is composed of:

- h. **Six *Deva Lokas* (or Celestial Worlds):**
  - i. *Catumaharajika* (the World of the Four Guardian Kings)
  - ii. *Tavatimsa* (the World of the Thirty-three)
  - iii. *Yama*
  - iv. *Tusita*
  - v. *Nimmanarati* (those who enjoy their own creations)
  - vi. *Paranimmita-vasavati* (those who enjoy others' creations)
    - i. **The Human World**
    - j. **The four Lower Worlds (*Apaya*):**
      - i. *Niraya* (Hell)
      - ii. *Tiracchana* (Animal World)
      - iii. *Peta* (Ghost World)
      - iv. *Asura* (Demon World)

These planes of existence are pure or impure, cool or hot, luminous or dark, light or heavy,

pleasant or wretched -- according to the character of the mental forces generated by the Mind through the volition (*Cetana*) associated with a series of actions, words and thoughts.

For example, take the case of a religious man who suffuses the whole universe of beings with boundless love and compassion. He must be generating such mental forces as are pure, cooling, luminous, light and pleasant, forces which normally settle down in the *Brahma* Worlds.

Let us now take the reverse case of a man who is dissatisfied or angry. As the saying goes, "The face reflects the mind." The impurity, heat, darkness, heaviness and wretchedness of his mind are immediately reflected in the person -- visible even to the naked eye.

This is due, I may say, to the generation of the evil mental forces of *Dosa* (anger) which go down to the lower worlds of existence. This is

also the case for the mental forces arising out of *Lobha* (greed) or *Moha* (delusion).

In the case of meritorious deeds such as devotion, morality and charity, which have at their base attachment to future well-being, the mental forces generated are such as will normally be located in the sensuous planes of *Devas* (celestial beings) and of Mankind. These, ladies and gentlemen, are some of the concepts in Buddhism relevant to the life story of Gotama Buddha.

### **The Preparation to Become a Buddha [4]**

Gotama Buddha is the fourth of the five Buddhas to rise in the World-cycle which is known as a *Bhadda Kappa* (an auspicious world-cycle). His predecessors were the Buddhas *Kakusanda*, *Konagamana* and *Kassapa*. There were also innumerable Buddhas who arose in earlier world-cycles and who preached the very same *Dhamma* that gives

deliverance from suffering and death to all matured beings.

Buddhas are all compassionate, glorious and enlightened. A hermit by the name of *Sumedha* was inspired by Buddha *Dipankara* -- so much so, that he took the vow to make all the necessary preparations to become a Buddha in the course of time. Buddha *Dipankara* gave him his blessings and prophesied that he would become a Buddha by the name of *Gotama* after a lapse of four incalculable periods [5] of world-cycles plus one hundred thousand world-cycles (*Kappas*).

From then onwards, existence after existence, the *Bodhisatta* (future Buddha) conserved mental energies of the highest order through the practice of the ten *Paramitas* (or *Paramis*, Virtues leading toward Perfection):

- xi. - *Dana Parami* - Virtue in Alms-giving (or generosity)
- xii. - *Sila Parami* - Morality

- xiii. - *Nekkhamma Parami* - Renunciation
- xiv. - *Panna Parami* - Wisdom
- xv. - *Viriya Parami* - Great effort (or perseverance)
- xvi. - *Khanti Parami* - Forbearance (or patience)
- xvii. - *Sacca Parami* - Truthfulness
- xviii. - *Aditthana Parami* - Determination
- xix. - *Metta Parami* - All-embracing Love
- xx. - *Upekkha Parami* - Equanimity

It is, therefore, a most arduous task to become a Buddha. Utmost strength of will-power is necessary even to think of it. The *Bodhisatta's* preparatory period came to an end with the life of King *Vessantara* [6] who excelled any living being in Alms-giving.

He gave away his kingdom, his wife and his children and all his worldly possessions, for the consummation of his solemn vow taken before the Buddha *Dipankara*. The next existence was in the *Tusita* (celestial plane) as the glorious *Deva Setaketu*, until he got his release from that plane of existence and took conception in the

womb of *Maya Devi*, the queen of King *Suddhodana* of *Kapilavatthu*, a place near modern Nepal.

When time was drawing near for her confinement, the queen expressed her desire to go to the place of her own parents for the event. King *Suddhodana* accordingly sent her there with a befitting retinue and guards. On the way, a halt was made at the *Lumbini* Grove. She descended from her palanquin and enjoyed the cool breeze and fragrance of Sal flowers.

While holding out her right hand to a branch of a nearby Sal tree for a flower, all of a sudden and unexpectedly, she gave birth to a son who was to become the All-Enlightened Buddha.

Simultaneously, the natural order of things in the cosmos was revolutionized in many respects and thirty-two wonderful phenomena were vivified. All material worlds were shaken from their foundation up. There were unusual illuminations in the solar system. All the beings

of the material planes could see each other. The deaf and dumb were cured. Celestial music was heard everywhere, and so on.

At that moment, *Kaladevala*, the hermit teacher of King *Suddhodana*, was discoursing with the celestial beings of the *Tavatimsa Deva* world. He was a hermit of fame who had mastered the eight attainments (*Samapattis*) which gave him super-normal powers. Learning of the birth of a son to the king in the midst of the rejoicing in all the *Rupa* and *Kama* worlds, he hurried back to the palace and desired the baby to be brought before him for his blessings. As the king was about to place the baby before his teacher for the occasion, a marvel took place. The baby rose into the air and rested his tiny feet on the head of *Kaladevala* who at once understood that the baby was no other than the Embryonic Buddha.

He smiled at this knowledge, but cried almost immediately thereafter, because he foresaw that he would not live to hear his teachings, and that after his death, he would be in the *Arupa*

*Brahma Loka* (the Immaterial Planes of the *Brahmas*) whence he would have no relationship with any of the material planes. He regretted bitterly that he would miss the Buddha and his teachings.

On the fifth day, the child was named *Siddhattha* in the presence of renowned astrologer-palmists who agreed that the child had all the characteristics of a Buddha-to-be. His mother, the queen, however, died a week after her confinement, and the child was taken care of by his maternal aunt, *Pajapati-Gotami*. *Siddhattha* and spent his early years in ease, luxury and culture.

He was acclaimed to be a prodigy in both intellect and strength. The king spared no pains to make the course of his life smooth. Three separate palaces were built to suit the three seasons (hot, cold, and rainy) with all the necessities that would make the prince sink in sensuality. That was because the king, out of paternal affection, desired his son to remain in

worldly life as a king rather than become an Enlightened Buddha.

King *Suddhodana* was ever watchful that his son should be in an environment that would give him no chance for higher philosophical ideas. In order to make sure that the thoughts of the prince would never turn in this direction, he ordered that nobody serving him or in his association was ever to speak a single word about such things as old age, sickness or death. They were to act as if there were no unpleasant things in this world.

Servants and attendants who showed the least sign of growing old, weak or sickly were replaced. On the other hand, there was dancing, music and enjoyable parties right through, to keep him under a complete shade of sensuality.

## **The Great Renunciation**

As days, months and years passed, however, the monotony of the sensual surroundings gradually lost their hold over the mind of Prince

*Siddhatta.* The mental energies of virtue conserved in all his earlier innumerable lives for the great goal of Buddhahood were automatically aroused. At times, when the world of sensuality lost control over his mind, his inner self worked its way up and raised his mind to a state of purity and tranquillity with the strength of *Samadhi* (concentration) such as had raised his baby form into space and onto the head of *Kaladevala*. The war of nerves began.

An escape from sensuality and passion was his first consideration. He wanted to know what existed outside the walls of the palace, for he had not gone out even once. He wished to see Nature as it is and not as man has made it. Accordingly, he decided to see the Royal Park, outside the palace walls. On the way to the park, in spite of the precautions taken by the king to get the roads clear of unpleasant sights, he saw an old man bent with age on the very first visit. Next he saw a sick person in the agony of a fatal malady. Thereafter he met with a human corpse.

On the last trip he came across a monk. All these predisposed his mind to serious thinking.

His mental attitude was changed. His mind became clear of impurities and tuned up with the forces of his own virtues conserved in the *Sankhara Loka* (the plane of mental forces). By then, his mind had become freed from hindrances, was tranquil, pure and strong. It all happened on the night when a son was born to his wife, a new fetter to bind him down.

He was, however, immune to anything which would tend to upset the equilibrium of his mind. The virtues of determination worked their way for a strong resolve and he made up his mind to seek the way of escape from birth, old age, suffering and death.

It was midnight when the solemn determination was made. He asked his attendant *Channa* to keep his stallion *Khanthaka* ready. After a parting look at his wife and the newly born babe, Prince *Siddhattha* broke away from all the

ties of family and of the world and made the Great Renunciation. He rode across the town to the river Anoma, which he crossed, never to return until his mission had been achieved.

## **The Search for Truth**

After this Great Renunciation, Prince *Siddhattha* went around in search of possible teachers in the garb of a wandering ascetic with a begging bowl in his hand. He placed himself under the spiritual guidance of two renowned *Brahman* teachers, *Alara* and *Uddaka*. *Alara* laid stress on the belief in the *atman* (soul) and taught that the soul attained perfect release when freed from material limitations. This did not satisfy the prince. He next went to *Uddaka* who emphasized too much the effect of *Kamma* (volitional actions) and the transmigration of the soul.

Both could not get out of the conception of "soul" and the prince ascetic felt that there was something else to learn. He, therefore, left both

of them to work out the way to emancipation on his own.

By that time, of course, he had learned the eight attainments (*Samapattis*) and had become an adept in the exercise of all the supernormal powers including the ability to read events of many world-cycles to come and a similar period of the past. These were all in the mundane field and they did not much concern the prince ascetic, whose ambition had been an escape from this mundane field of birth, suffering and death.

He was joined later by five ascetics, one of whom, *Kondanna* by name, was the astrologer-palmist who definitely foretold on the fifth day after his birth that he would surely become a Buddha. These ascetics served him well throughout the six years during which he was engaged in fastings and meditation, subjecting himself to various forms of rigorous austerities and discipline till he was reduced to almost a skeleton. In fact, one day, he fell down in a

swoon through exhaustion. When he survived this condition, he changed his method, followed a middle course and found the way to his Enlightenment was clearer.

## **The Attainment of Buddhahood**

It was on the eve of the full-moon day of *Vesakha*[7] just 2540 years ago [i.e., from 1951] that Prince *Siddhattha*, a wandering ascetic, sat cross-legged beneath a Bodhi tree on the bank of the river *Neranjara* in the Forest of *Uruvela* (near present day Buddhagaya) -- with the strongest of determinations -- not to rise from that posture on any account until he gained the Truth and Enlightenment, Buddhahood -- even if the attempt might mean the loss of his very life.

The great event was approaching. The prince ascetic mustered up all his strength of mind to secure that one-pointedness of mind which is so essential for the discovery of Truth. The

balancing of the mind, the prince found on this occasion, was not so easy as hitherto.

There was not only the combination of the mental forces of the Lower Planes with those of the Higher Planes all around him, but also interferences strong enough to upset, off and on, the equilibrium of his mind. The resistance of the impenetrable masses of forces against the radiation of the light normally secured by him was unusual, perhaps because it was a final bid for Buddhahood, and *Mara*, the supreme controller of evil forces, was behind the scenes.

The prince, however, worked his way through slowly but surely, backed up by the mental forces of virtues which must inevitably come back to him at the right moment. He made a vow and called upon all the *Brahmas* and *Devas* who had witnessed the fulfillment of his ten great Perfections to join hands with him in the struggle for supremacy. This done, the association with the transcendently pure mental forces of the *Brahmas* and *Devas* had salutary

effect. The thick masses of forces, which seemed impenetrable for a time, broke away and with steady improvement in the control over the mind, they were wiped out once and for all.

All the hindrances having been overcome, the prince was able to raise his power of concentration and put the mind to a state of complete purity, tranquillity and equanimity. Gradually, the consciousness of true insight possessed him. The solution to the vital problems which confronted him made its appearance in his consciousness as an inspiration.

By introspective meditation on the realities of nature in his own self, it came vividly to him that there is no substantiality, as there seems to be, in the human body and that it is nothing but the sum total of innumerable millions of *Kalapas*, each about the size of 1/46,656th part of a particle of dust raised by the wheel of a chariot in summer.

On further investigation, he realized that this *Kalapa* also is matter in constant change or flux. So also with the mind, which is a representation of the mental forces (creative) going out and the mental forces (created) coming into the system of an individual continually and throughout eternity.

The Buddha then proclaimed that the Eye of Wisdom (*Panna-cakkhu*) arose when he overcame all false perception of substantiality within his own self. He saw by means of the lens of *Samadhi* (concentration) the *Kalapas* on which he next applied the law of *Anicca* (impermanence) and reduced them to nonentity or behavior, doing away with what we, in Buddhism, call *Pannatti* (concept) and coming to a state of *Paramattha*, understanding the nature of forces or, in other words, **Ultimate reality**.

Accordingly, he came to a realization of the perpetual change of mind and matter in himself

(*Anicca*) and as a sequel thereto the Truth of Suffering (*Dukkha*).

It was then that the ego-centralism in him broke down into the void and he got over to a stage beyond Suffering (*Dukkha Nirodha*) with no more traces of *Atta*, or attachment to self, left behind. Mind-and-matter were to him but empty phenomena which roll on forever, within the range of the Law of Cause and Effect and the Law of Dependent Origination. The Truth was realized.

The inherent qualities of an Embryonic Buddha then developed and complete Enlightenment came to him by the dawn of *Vesakha*. Verily, Prince *Siddhattha* attained *Samma-Sambodhi* (Supreme Enlightenment) and became the Buddha, the Awakened One, the Enlightened One -- the All- Knowing One.

He was awake in a way compared with which all others were asleep and dreaming. He was enlightened in a way compared with which all

other men were stumbling and groping in the dark. He knew with a knowledge compared with which all that other men knew was but a kind of ignorance.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have taken so much of your time today. I thank you all for your patient listening. I must also thank the clergy of the church for their kind permission given to me for this address.

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### ***Lecture No. 2 (September 30, 1951)***

Last Sunday I gave you a brief outline -- a very brief one too -- of the life of our Lord Buddha, up to the moment of his attainment of Buddhahood. I am going to tell you today what his teachings are.

Buddhist teachings are preserved in what we call the *Tipitakas*, consisting of the *Suttas* (Discourses), the *Vinaya* (the rules of discipline for *Sanghas*, or monks and nuns) and the

*Abhidhamma* (the philosophical Teachings). We have the *Tipitakas* in *Pali* in several volumes which will require an intelligent *Pali* scholar some months just to read through. I propose, therefore, to confine myself today only to essentials, that is to say, the fundamental Truths of Buddhism.

Before Lord Buddha took upon himself the task of spreading his *Dhamma* (Teachings), he remained in silent meditation for a continuous period of 49 days, that is, seven days under the Bodhi tree and seven days each in six other spots nearby, enjoying at times the peace of Supreme *Nibbana* and at others going deeper in investigation into the most delicate problems of *Paramattha-Dhamma* (Ultimate Realities). On his complete mastery of the law of *Patthana* (the Law of Relations), in which the infinite modes of relations between thought moments are also dealt with, there emerged from his body brilliant rays of six colours, which eventually

settled down as a halo of six-coloured rays around his head.

He passed through this seven-times-seven-days' meditation without food. It is beyond us all to be without food for 49 days. The fact remains that he was throughout the period on a mental plane as distinct from a physical plane, in which mankind normally is. It is not material food that maintains the fine-material existence and life-continuum of beings in the Fine-material Worlds of the Brahmas, but the *Jhanic Piti*, which in itself is a nutriment.

So also was the case with the Buddha, whose existence during this long period was on a mental rather than physical plane. Our experiments in this line of research have firmly convinced us that for a man of such high intellectual and mental development as the Buddha, this is a possibility.

It was the dawn of the 50th day of his Buddhahood when he arose from this long spell

of meditation. Not that he was tired or exhausted, but, as he was no longer in the mental plane, he felt a longing for food.

At that time, two traders of a foreign land were travelling in several carts loaded with merchandise through the Uruvela forest. A *Deva* of the forest who had been their relative in one of their previous existences advised them to take the opportunity of paying homage to the All-Enlightened Buddha who had just arisen from his meditation. They accordingly went to the place where the Buddha was seated, illumined by the halo of six-coloured rays.

They could not resist their feelings. They lay prostrate in worship and adoration before the Buddha and later offered preserved rice cakes with honey for the first meal of the Buddha. They were accepted as his lay disciples. On their request that they might be given some tokens for their worship, the Buddha presented them with eight strands of hair from his head. You will be surprised to know that these two

traders were *Tapassu* and *Bhallika* from *Ukkala*[8], which today is known as Rangoon, where you are at this moment. And the renowned Shwedagon, which you all probably have visited, is the Pagoda in which were enshrined all the eight hair-relics of the Buddha under the personal direction of the then ruler of *Ukkala*, 2540 years ago.

It has been preserved and renovated till now by successive Buddhist kings and devout laymen. Unfortunately, however, these two traders of *Ukkala*, who had the privilege of becoming the first lay disciples of the Buddha, were disciples only by faith, without a taste of the *Buddha-Dhamma* in actual practice, which alone would give them deliverance from suffering and death.

Faith is, no doubt, a preliminary requisite, but it is the practice of the Teachings which really counts. The Buddha therefore said, "The Path must be trod by each individual; Buddhas do but point the Way." [9]

## **The Teachings of the Buddha**

Buddhism is not a religion according to the dictionary meaning[10] of the word religion because it has no centre in god, as is the case in all other religions.

Strictly speaking, Buddhism is a system of philosophy co-ordinated with a code of morality, physical and mental. The goal in view is the extinction of suffering and death.

The Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha in his first sermon, known as the *Dhamma-cakkapavattana Sutta* (the Discourse to set in motion the Wheel of *Dhamma*) form the basis on which is founded this system of philosophy.

In fact, the first three of the Four Noble Truths expound the philosophy of the Buddha, while the fourth (the Eightfold Noble Path which is a code of morality-cum-philosophy) serves as a means to the end.

This first sermon was given to the five ascetics led by *Kondanna*, who were his early companions in search of the Truth. *Kondanna* was the first disciple of the Buddha in practice to become an *Arahat* (a Noble One who has gone beyond the limitations of all fetters).

Now we come to the Four Noble Truths. They are:

- 1.- *Dukkha Sacca* - The Truth of Suffering
- 2.- *Samudaya Sacca* - The Truth of the Origin of Suffering
- 3.- *Nirodha Sacca* - The Truth of the Extinction of Suffering
- 4.- *Magga Sacca* - The Truth of the Path leading to the Extinction of Suffering

To come to a complete understanding of the fundamental concepts in the philosophy of the Buddha, emphasis is laid on the need for the realisation of the Truth of Suffering. To bring home this point, Lord Buddha tackled the problem from two different angles.

**Firstly**, by a process of reasoning. He made his disciples feel that life is a struggle, life is suffering; birth is suffering; old age is suffering; illness is suffering; death is suffering. The influence of sensuality is, however, so strong in mankind that people are normally apt to forget this themselves, to forget the price they have to pay.

Just think for a moment how life exists in the pre-natal period; how from the moment of birth the child has to struggle for existence; what preparations he has to make to face life; how, as a man, he has to struggle till he breathes his last. You can very well imagine what life is. Life is indeed suffering.

The more one is attached to self, the greater is the suffering. In fact, the pains and sufferings a man has to undergo are suppressed in favor of momentary sensual pleasures which are but occasional spotlights in the darkness. Were it not for the *Moha* (delusion) which keeps him away from the Truth, he would surely have

worked out his way to emancipation from the rounds of life, suffering and death.

**Secondly**, the Buddha made it known to his disciples that the human body is composed of *Kalapas* (subatomic units), each dying out simultaneously as it comes into being. Each *Kalapa* is a mass formed of the following nature elements:

- v. - *Pathavi* - Extension (literally, earth)
- vi. - *Apo* - Cohesion (lit., water)
- vii. - *Tejo* - Radiation (lit., heat and cold)
- viii. - *Vayo* - Motion (lit., air)
- ix. - *Vanna* - Colour
- x. - *Gandha* - Smell
- xi. - *Rasa* - Taste
- xii. - *Oja* - Nutritive essence

The first four are called *Maha-Bhutas*, i.e., essential material qualities which are predominant in a *Kalapa*. The other four are merely subsidiaries which are dependent upon and born out of the former.

A *Kalapa* is the minutest particle noticeable in the physical plane. It is only when the eight nature elements (which have merely the characteristic of behaviour) are together that the entity of a *Kalapa* is formed. In other words, the coexistence of these eight nature elements of behaviour makes a mass which, in Buddhism, is known as a *Kalapa*.

These *Kalapas*, according to the Buddha, are in a state of perpetual change or flux. They are nothing but a stream of energies, just like the light of a candle or an electric bulb. The body, as we call it, is not an entity as it seems to be, but a continuum of matter with the coexisting life-force.

To a casual observer, a piece of iron is motionless. The scientist knows that it is composed of electrons, etc., all in a state of perpetual change or flux. If it is so with a piece of iron, what will be the case for a living organism, say a human being? The changes that are taking place inside the human body must be

more violent. Does man feel the rocking vibrations within himself? Does the scientist who knows that all is in a state of change or flux ever feel that his own body is but energy and vibration?

What will be the repercussion on the mental attitude of the man who introspectively sees that his own body is mere energy and vibration? To quench thirst one may just easily drink a glass of water from a village well. Supposing his eyes are as powerful as microscopes, he would surely hesitate to drink the very same water in which he must see the magnified microbes.

So also, when one comes to a realization of the perpetual change within oneself (i.e., *Anicca* or Impermanence), one must necessarily come to the understanding as a sequel thereto of the Truth of Suffering as the consequence of the sharp sense of feeling of the radiation, vibration and friction of the subatomic units within. Indeed, life is suffering both within and without, to all appearances and in ultimate reality.

When I say, Life is suffering, as the Buddha taught, please be so good as not to run away with the idea that, if that is so, life is miserable, life is not worth living, and that the Buddhist concept of suffering is a terrible concept which will give you no chance of a reasonably happy life. What is happiness?

For all that science has achieved in the field of materialism, are the peoples of the world happy? They may find sensual pleasure off and on, but in their heart of hearts they are not happy concerning what has happened, what is happening and what may happen next. Why? This is because, while man has mastery over matter, he is still lacking in mastery over his mind.

Pleasure born of sensuality is nothing compared with the *Piti* (or rapture) born of the inner peace of mind which can be secured through a process of Buddhist meditation. Sense pleasures are preceded and followed by troubles and pains, as in the case of a rustic who finds pleasure in

cautiously scratching the itches over his body, whereas *Piti* is free from such troubles and pains either before or after.

It will be difficult for you, looking from a sensuous field, to appreciate what that *Piti* is like. But I know you can enjoy it and have a taste of it for comparative evaluation.

There is therefore nothing to the supposition that Buddhism teaches something that will make you feel miserable with the nightmare of suffering. But please take it from me that it will give you an escape from the normal conditions of life, a lotus as it were in a pond of crystal water immune from its fiery surroundings. It will give you that Peace Within which will satisfy you that you are getting not only beyond the day-to-day troubles of life, but slowly and surely beyond the limitation of life, suffering and death.

What then is the Origin of Suffering? The origin of it, the Buddha said, is *Tanha* or Craving.

Once the seed of desire is sown, it grows into greed and multiplies into craving or lust, either for power or for material gains.

The man in whom this seed is sown becomes a slave to these cravings and he is automatically driven to strenuous labors of mind and body to keep pace with them till the end comes. The final result must surely be the accumulation of the evil mental forces generated by his own actions, words and thoughts which are motivated by *Lobha* (desire) and *Dosa* (anger) inherent in him.

What then is the Path leading to the Extinction Philosophically again, it is the mental forces of actions (*Sankhara*) which react in the course of time on the person originating them, and which are responsible for this stream of mind and matter, the origin of suffering within.

# **The Path Leading to the Extinction of Suffering**

of Suffering? The Path is none other than the Noble Eightfold Path taught by the Buddha in his first sermon. This Eightfold Path is divided into three main stages, namely, *Sila*, *Samadhi* and *Panna*.

## **Sila (The Precepts)**

13. Right Speech
14. Right Action
15. Right Livelihood

## **Samadhi (Tranquillity of Mind)**

4. Right Exertion
5. Right Attentiveness
6. Right Concentration

## **Panna (Wisdom, Insight)**

7. Right Aspiration
8. Right Understanding

A. **Sila.** The three characteristic aspects of *Sila* are:

- 1.- *Samma-vaca*: - Right Speech
- 2.- *Samma-kammanta*: - Right Action
- 3.- *Samma-ajiva*: - Right Livelihood

By Right Speech is meant: Speech which must be true, beneficial and neither foul nor malicious.

By Right Action is meant: The fundamentals of morality, which are opposed to killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and drunkenness.

By Right Livelihood is meant: A way of living by trades other than those which increase the suffering of all beings -- such as slave trading, the manufacture of weapons and traffic in intoxicating drugs.

These represent generally the Code of Morality as initially pronounced by the Buddha in his very first sermon. Later, however, he amplified it and introduced separate codes for the monks and lay disciples.

I need not worry you with what has been prescribed for monks. I will just let you know what the code of morality, or the precepts, for a Buddhist lay disciple is. This is called *Panca Sila*, or the Five Precepts, which are:

- 4.- **Panatipata:** Abstaining from killing any sentient being. (Life is the most precious thing for all beings and in prescribing this precept the Buddha's compassion extends to all beings.)
- 5.- **Adinn'adana:** Abstaining from taking what is not given. (This serves as a check against improper desires for possessions.)
- 6.- **Kamesu-miccha-cara:** Abstaining from sexual misconduct. (Sexual desire is latent in man. This is irresistible to almost all. Unlawful sexual indulgence is therefore something which the Buddha prohibited.)

- 7.- **Musavada:** Abstaining from telling lies. (This precept is included to fulfil by way of speech the essence of Truth.)
- 8.- **Sura-meraya:** Abstaining from intoxication. (Intoxication causes a man to lose his steadfastness of mind and the reasoning power so essential for the realization of Truth.)

The *Panca Sila* therefore is intended to control actions and words and to serve as a foundation for *Samadhi* (equanimity of mind).

B. **Samadhi.** Ladies and gentlemen, we now come to the mental aspect of Buddhism, which I am sure will greatly interest you. In the second stage of the Eightfold Noble Path (*Samadhi*) are included:

- 1.- *Samma-vayama:* - Right Exertion
- 2.- *Samma-sati:* - Right Attentiveness
- 3.- *Samma-samadhi:* - Right Concentration

Right Exertion is, of course, a prerequisite for Right Attentiveness. Unless one makes a determined effort to narrow down the range of thoughts of one's wavering and unsteady mind, one cannot expect to secure that attentiveness of mind which in turn helps one to bring the mind by Right Concentration to a state of One-pointedness and Tranquillity (or *Samadhi*).

It is here that the mind becomes freed from hindrances -- pure and tranquil, illumined within and without. The mind in such a state becomes powerful and bright. Outside, it is represented by light which is just a mental reflex, with the light varying in degrees from that of a star to that of the sun. To be plain, this light which is reflected before the mind's eye in complete darkness is a manifestation of the purity, tranquillity and serenity of the mind.

The Hindus work for it. To go from light into the void and to come back to light is

truly *Brahmanic*. The New Testament, in Matthew, speaks of "a body full of light." We hear also of Roman Catholic priests meditating regularly for this very miraculous light. The Koran, too, gives prominence to the "Manifestation of Divine Light."

This mental reflex of light denotes the purity of mind within, and the purity of mind forms the essence of a religious life, whether one be Buddhist, Hindu, Christian or Muslim.

Indeed, Purity of Mind is the greatest common denominator of all religions. Love, which alone is a means for the unity of mankind, must be supreme, and it cannot be so unless the mind is transcendently pure.

A balanced mind is necessary to balance the unbalanced minds of others. "As a fletcher makes straight his arrow, a wise man makes straight his trembling and unsteady thought, which is difficult to guard, difficult to hold back." [11]

So said the Buddha. Exercise of the mind is just as necessary as exercise of the physical body. Why not, then, give exercise to the mind and make it pure and strong so that you may enjoy the *Jhanic* Peace Within?

When Inner Peace begins to permeate the mind, you will surely progress in the knowledge of Truth.

Believe it or not, it is our experience that under a proper guide, this Inner Peace and Purity of Mind with light can be secured by *one and all* irrespective of their religion or creed, provided they have sincerity of purpose and are prepared to submit to the guide for the period of trial.

When by continued practice one has complete mastery over one's mind, one can enter into *Jhanic* states (absorption states) and gradually develop oneself to acquire the attainments (*Samapattis*) which will give one supernormal powers like those exercised

by *Kaladevala*, the hermit teacher of King *Suddhodana*.

This, of course, must be tried with very strict morality and away from human habitations, but it is rather dangerous for those who still have traces of passion in them. Anyway, such a practice, which gives supernormal powers in this mundane field, was not encouraged by the Buddha, whose sole object of developing *Samadhi* was to have the purity and strength of mind essential for the realization of Truth.

We have in Buddhism forty methods of concentration, of which the most outstanding is *Anapana*, that is, concentration on the incoming and outgoing breath, the method followed by all the Buddhas.

**C. Panna.** Ladies and gentlemen, I will now take up the philosophical aspect of Buddhism in the third stage of the Noble

Eightfold Path, *Panna* or Insight. The two characteristic aspects of *Panna* are:

- 1.- *Samma-sankappa*: - Right Aspiration  
(or Right Thought)
- 2.- *Samma-ditthi*: - Right Understanding

Right Understanding of the Truth is the aim and object of Buddhism, and Right Aspiration (or Right Thought) is the analytical study of mind and matter, both within and without, in order to come to a realization of Truth.

You have heard of *Nama* and *Rupa* (mind and matter) so many times. I owe you a further explanation.

*Nama* is so called because of its tendency to incline towards an object of sense. *Rupa* is so called because of its impermanence due to perpetual change. The nearest terms in English to *Nama* and *Rupa* therefore are mind and matter. I say "nearest" because the meaning is not exact.

*Nama*, strictly speaking, is the term applied to the following:

- 3.- Consciousness - (*Vinnana*)
- 4.- Feeling - (*Vedana*)
- 5.- Perception - (*Sanna*)
- 6.- Volitional Energies (or Mental Forces)  
- (*Sankhara*).

These, together with *Rupa* in the material state, make what we call the *Panca-kkhanda* or Five Aggregates. It is in these five aggregates that the Buddha has summed up all the mental and physical phenomena of existence, which in reality is a continuum of mind and matter coexisting, but which to a layman is his personality or ego.

In *Samma-sankappa* (Right Aspiration), the disciple, who by then has developed the powerful lens of *Samadhi*, focuses his attention into his own self and by introspective meditation makes an analytical study of the

nature, first of *Rupa* (Matter) and then of *Nama* (mind and the mental properties).

He feels -- and at times he also sees -- the *Kalapas* in their true state. He begins to realize that both *Rupa* and *Nama* are in constant change -- impermanent and fleeting. As his power of concentration increases, the nature of the forces in him becomes more and more vivid. He can no longer get out of the impression that the *Panca-kkhandha*, or Five Aggregates, are suffering, within the law of Cause and Effect. He is now convinced that, in reality, all is suffering within and without and there is no such thing as an ego. He longs for a state beyond suffering.

So eventually going beyond the bounds of suffering, he moves from the mundane to the supramundane state and enters the stream of *Sotapanna*, the first of the four stages of the *Ariyas* (Noble Ones). Then he becomes free from (i) ego, (ii) doubts and (iii) attachment to rules and rituals.

The second stage is *Sakadagami* (Once-Returner), on coming to which sensuous craving and ill-will become attenuated.

He ceases to have any passion or anger when he attains the third stage of *Anagami* (Non-Returner).

*Arahatship* is the final goal. Each of the *Ariyas* can feel what *Nibbana* is like, even as a man, as often as he may choose by going into the fruition stage of *Sotapanna*, etc., which gives him the *Nibbanic Peace Within*.

This Peace Within, which is identified with *Nibbana*, has no parallel because it is supramundane. Compared to this, the *Jhanic Peace Within*, which I mentioned earlier in dealing with *Samadhi*, is negligible because while the *Nibbanic Peace Within* takes one beyond the limits of the thirty-one planes of existence, the *Jhanic Peace Within* will still keep one within these planes -- that is to say, in the fine-material world of the *Brahmas*.

Ladies and gentlemen, just a word more. What I have said includes only some of the fundamental aspects of Buddhism. With the time at my disposal, I hope I have given you my best:

To come to a state of Purity of Mind with a light before you;

To go into a Jhanic state at will;

To experience for yourselves Nibbanic Peace Within.

These are all within your reach.

Why not, then, try for the first two at least, which are within the confines of your own religion? I am prepared to give you any help that you may require.

May I again express my gratitude to you all for your patient listening. My thanks are also due to the clergy of the church for their kind permission.

### *Lecture No. 3 (14th October 1951)*

My talks on "What Buddhism Is" will not be complete without a reference, though in brief, to the Law of *Paticca-samuppada* (the Law of Dependent Origination) and the Law of *Patthana* (the Law of Relations, or Cause and Effect).

### **The Law of Dependent Origination**

It will be recalled that in summing up my first lecture, I mentioned how Prince Siddhattha, the wandering ascetic, realised the truth and became a Buddha. Lest you forget, I will repeat that portion again.

Verily, Prince Siddhattha attained *Samma-sambhodhi* and became the Buddha, the Awakened One, the Enlightened One, the All-knowing One. He was awake in a way compared with which all others were asleep and dreaming. He was enlightened in a way compared with which all other men were stumbling and groping in the dark. He knew

with a knowledge compared with which all that other men knew was but a kind of ignorance.

All religions, no doubt, claim to show the way to Truth. In Buddhism, for so long as one has not realized the truth (i.e., the Four Noble Truths), one is in ignorance.

It is this ignorance (*Avijja*) that is responsible for the generation of mental forces (*Sankhara*) which regulate the life continuum (or consciousness) (*Vinnana*) in all sentient beings.

Just as the life continuum is established in a new existence, mind and matter (*Nama* and *Rupa*) appear automatically and correlatively. These, in turn, are developed into a vehicle or body with sense centres (*Salayatana*). These sense centres give rise to contact (*Phassa*) and contact of these sense centres with sense objects gives rise to sense impressions (*Vedana*) which have the effect of arousing desire (*Tanha*) followed closely by attachment or clinging to desire (*Upadana*). It is this attachment, or clinging to

desire, which is the cause of becoming (Bhava) or of existence with the attendant birth (Jati), old age, illness, death, anxiety, agony, pains, etc. (*Jara-marana*, etc.), all of which denote suffering. In this way the Buddha traced the origin of suffering to ignorance.

So the Buddha said: [12]

Ignorance is the origin of mental forces; Mental forces, the origin of the life continuum; The life continuum, the origin of mind and matter; Mind and matter, the origin of the sense centres; The sense centres, the origin of contact; Contact, the origin of impression; Impression, the origin of desire; Desire, the origin of attachment; Attachment, the origin of becoming (existence); Becoming (existence), the origin of birth; Birth, the origin of old age, illness, death, anxiety, agony, pains, etc. (which are all suffering).

This chain of origination is called the Law of Dependent Origination and the root cause of all these is, therefore, *Avijja*, ignorance -- that is, ignorance of the Truth.

It is true that, superficially, desire is the origin of suffering. This is so simple. When you want a thing, desire is aroused. You have to work for it or you suffer for it. But this is not enough.

The Buddha said, "The five aggregates, which are nothing but mind and matter, also are suffering." The Truth of suffering in Buddhism is complete only when one realizes by seeing mind and matter as they really are (both within and without) and not as they seem to be.

The Truth of Suffering is, therefore, something which must be experienced before it can be understood. For example, we all know from science that everything that exists is nothing but vibration caused by the whirling movement of infinite numbers of sub-atomic particles, but how many of us can persuade ourselves to believe that our own bodies are subject to the same Law? Why not then try to feel things as they really are in so far as they relate to yourself?

One must be above physical conditions for this purpose. One must develop mental energy powerful enough to see things in their true state. With developed mental power, one can see through and through; one can see more than what one can see with the help of the latest scientific instruments. If that be so, why should one not see what exactly is happening in one's own self -- the atoms, the electrons and what not, all changing fast and yet never ending. It is, of course, by no means easy.

Here is an extract from a diary of one of my disciples which will give you an idea of what Suffering Within is:

21/8/51. As soon as I began to meditate I felt as if someone were boring a hole through my head and I felt the sensation of crawling ants all over my head. I wanted to scratch, but my Guru forbade me from doing it. Within an hour I saw the sparkling radium of blue light tinged with violet colour entering inside my body gradually. When I lay in my room continuously for three

hours I became almost senseless and I felt a terrible shock in my body. I was about to be frightened but my Guru encouraged me to proceed on. I felt my whole body heated up and I also felt the induction of the electronic needle at every part of my body.

22/8/51. Today also I lay down meditating for nearly three hours. I had the sensation that my whole body was in flames and I also saw sparkles of blue and violet rays of light moving from top to bottom aimlessly. Then my Guru told me that the changing in the body is *Anicca* (impermanence) and the pain and suffering following it is *Dukkha* and that one must get to a state beyond *Dukkha* or Suffering.

23/8/51. My Guru asked me to concentrate on my breast without the radiation of light and added that we are reaching the stage of philosophy of our body. I did accordingly and came to the conclusion that our body is full of Sufferings.

In reality, this Suffering Within is a sequel to the keen sense of feeling of the vibration, radiation and friction of the atomic units experienced through a process of introspective meditation called *Vipassana* with the aid of the powerful lens of *Samadhi*.

Not knowing this Truth is indeed ignorance. Knowing this Truth in its Ultimate Reality means destruction of the root cause of suffering, that is, ignorance with all the links in the chain of causation ending with what we call "life" with its characteristics of old age, illness, anxiety, agony, pains, etc.

So much for the Law of Dependent Origination and the root cause of suffering.

## **The Law of Cause and Effect**

Let us now turn our attention to the Causal Law of Relations as expounded by the Buddha in the Law of *Patthana* in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. This is the Law in the course of the analytical study of which six coloured rays emerged from

the person of the Buddha during his non-stop meditation for 49 days soon after the attainment of Buddhahood. We have five volumes of about 500 pages each of *Pali* text on this very delicate subject. I will just give here only an idea of the Law. There are 24 types of Relations on which the fundamental principles of Cause and Effect in Buddhism are based. They are:

1. Condition - *Hetu*
2. Object - *Arammana*
3. Dominance - *Adhipati*
4. Contiguity - *Anantara*
5. Immediate Contiguity - *Samanantara*
6. Coexistence - *Sahajata*
7. Reciprocity - *Annamanna*
8. Dependence - *Nissaya*
9. Sufficing Condition - *Upanissaya*
10. Antecedence - *Purejata*
11. Consequence - *Pacchajata*
12. Succession - *Asevana*
13. Action - *Kamma*
14. Effect - *Vipaka*

15. Support - *Ahara*
16. Control - *Indriya*
17. Ecstasy - *Jhana*
18. Means - *Magga*
19. Association - *Sampayutta*
20. Dissociation - *Vippayutta*
21. Presence - *Atthi*
22. Absence - *Natthi*
23. Abeyance - *Vigata*
24. Continuance - *Avigata*

I will explain to you now about the co-relation of *Hetu* (condition) and *Kamma* (action) and the effect produced by their causes, as I understand them.

*Hetu* is the condition of the mind at one conscious moment of each *Kamma* (action) whether physical, vocal or mental. Each *Kamma* therefore produces a condition of mind which is either moral, immoral or neutral. This is what in Buddhism we call *Kusala Dhamma*, *Akusala Dhamma* and *Abyakata Dhamma*. These *Dhammas* are mere forces -- i.e., mental forces -

- which collectively create the Universe of Mental Forces as explained in my first lecture.

Moral (*Kusala*) Forces are positive forces generated from *Kammas* (actions, words and thoughts) motivated by such good deeds as alms-giving, welfare work, devotion, purification of mind, etc.

Immoral (*Akusala*) Forces are negative forces generated from *Kammas* (actions, words, and thoughts) motivated by desire, greed, lust, anger, hatred, dissatisfaction, delusion, etc.

Neutral (*Abyakata*) Forces are neither moral nor immoral. This is the case, for example, of an *Arahat* who has got rid of all traces of ignorance (*Avijja*). In the case of an *Arahat*, contact (*Phassa*) of sense objects with the sense centres produces no reaction to sense impressions (*Vedana*) whatsoever, just as no impression is possible on flowing water which is ever changing. To him, the whole framework of the body is but an ever-changing mass and any

impression thereon automatically breaks away with the mass.

Let us now adjust the moral and immoral forces generated by conditioned actions with the planes of existence. For this purpose, I will classify the planes of existence roughly as follows:

(1) *Arupa-* and *Rupa-Brahma* Planes.

These are beyond the range of sensuality. Supreme Love, Supreme Compassion, Supreme Joy at others' success or greatness and Supreme Equanimity of Mind are the four qualities of mind which generate transcendently pure, brilliant and extremely pleasing, cool, and light mental forces which find their location in the highest of the planes of existence. This is the reason that in these planes matter is superfine and there is nothing but radiance, and the vehicles or bodies of the Brahmas cannot be identified with matter but with radiation or light.

(2) The Sensuous Planes which are composed of:

(i) - the Planes of Celestial Beings

(ii) - the Human World

(iii)-the Planes of the Lower Forms of Existence

The Planes of Celestial Beings. All good or meritorious deeds, words or thoughts which have a taint of desire for future well-being create moral mental forces which are very pure, luminous, pleasant and light.

These find their location in the higher planes of celestial beings where matter is fine, luminous, pleasant and light. These celestial beings therefore, have astral bodies varying in fineness, luminosity and colour according to the planes to which they belong. Ordinarily they live in heavenly bliss till their own moral mental forces are consumed, when they revert to the lower planes of existence.

I will now pass on to (iii) the Planes of the Lower Forms of Existence. I will come to our Human World last.

The Planes of the Lower Forms of Existence.

All malicious, evil, demeritorious actions, words

and thoughts create mental forces which by nature are impure, dark, fiery, heavy and hard. The most impure, dark, fiery, heavy and hard mental forces should therefore find their place in Hell, the lowest of the four planes of existence. The matter in all these planes must, therefore, be hard, crude, unpleasant and hot. The human world is just above the concentration of these forces, which are meant for consumption by those beings destined for these lower forms of existence. These beings, with the exception of those in the animal world, are invisible to the ordinary human eye but visible to those only who have developed the higher powers of Samadhi and secured the Divine Eye. Here, suffering, both physical and mental, predominates. This is just the reverse of what happens in the planes of celestial beings.

The Human World. Now I come to the human world. This is a half-way house between heaven and hell. We experience pleasure and pain

mixed together, in degrees as determined by our own past *Kamma*.

From here, we can, by developing our mental attitude, draw in our own mental forces that are in the higher planes. It is also from here that we can go down to the depths of depravity and tune up with the forces of the Lower Order. There is no such constancy as in other planes of existence. One may be a saint today but one can be a rogue thereafter. One may be rich today but one may soon become poor. The vicissitudes of life here are very conspicuous. There is no man who is stable, no family which is stable, no community which is stable, no nation which is stable. All are subject to the Law of *Kamma*.

As this *Kamma* comes out of Mind, which is ever-changing, the effects of *Kamma* must necessarily also be changing.

It is the condition of the evil mental forces submerged in the Earth just under our feet which gives rise to the Law of Gravitation. For

as long as man has inherent impurities in him which, *prima facie*, exist, he is subject to this gravitational pull and if he dies with the mental attitude tuned up with mental forces of a plane of lower existence at the last moment of his life, at the moment of death, the next existence is automatically in that plane, in order to clear, in a manner of speaking, his debit account of mental forces there.

On the other hand, if at the moment of death his mental attitude is associated with forces in the human world, the next existence can be in the human world again. If, however, his mental attitude at the last moment of death is associated with the reminiscence of his good deeds, etc., the next existence will normally be in the celestial world, in order to enjoy the credit balance of his own mental forces there.

One goes to the *Brahma* world if, at the moment of death, one's mind is not sensual, but is pure and tranquil. This is how *Kamma* plays its role in Buddhism, with mathematical precision.

These, ladies and gentlemen, are the essential teachings of the Buddha. The way in which these teachings will affect the individual depends on how one takes it.

The same applies to the family, the community or people in general. We have Buddhists in Faith and Buddhists in Practice. Yet there is another class of Buddhists who are just labelled Buddhists by Birth. Only Buddhists in actual practice can secure the change in mental attitude and outlook. Let them only observe the five precepts. They are the followers of the teachings of the Buddha. If this were followed by all the Buddhists in Burma, there would be no internecine strife such as we have here in Burma.

But there is another disturbing factor: bodily requirements. One must have the bare necessities of life. Life is more precious to a person than anything else. The tendency, therefore, is for one to break laws of discipline,

whether religious or governmental, for his self-preservation and for others depending on him.

What is most essential is the generation of pure and good mental forces to combat the evil mental forces which dominate mankind. This is by no means easy. One cannot rise to a level of pure mental attitude without the help of a Teacher.

If we want effective power to combat these forces, we must work for it Dhammically, i.e., according to the *Dhamma*. Modern science has given us for what it is worth the atomic bomb, the most wonderful and at the same time the most dreadful product of man's intelligence. Is man using his intelligence in the right way? Is he creating good or bad mental forces, according to the spirit of Buddhism? It is our will that decides how and upon what subject we shall use intelligence. Instead of using intelligence only for the conquest of atomic energy in matter without, why not use it also for the conquest of atomic energy within. This will

give us the Peace Within and will enable us to share it with all others. We will then radiate such powerful and purified mental forces as will successfully counteract the evil forces which are all around us. Just as the light of a single candle has the power to dispel darkness in a room, so also the light developed in one man can help dispel darkness in several others.

To imagine that "good" can be done by means of an "evil" is an illusion, a nightmare. The case in point is that of Korea. For all the loss of lives on both sides, now over a million, are we nearer to or further away from Peace? These are the lessons which we have learnt. A change of the mental attitude of mankind through religion alone is the solution. What is necessary at the moment is mastery over mind and not only mastery over matter.

In Buddhism we differentiate *Loka Dhatu* from *Dhamma Dhatu*. By *Dhatu* is meant the nature elements or forces. *Loka Dhatu* is therefore matter (with its nature elements) within the

range of the physical plane. *Dhamma Dhatu*, however, comprises mind, mental properties and some aspects of the nature elements which are not in the physical but in the mental plane.

Modern science deals with what we call Loka Dhatu. It is just a base for *Dhamma Dhatu* in the mental plane. A step further and we come to the mental plane; not with the knowledge of modern science but with the knowledge of *Buddha-Dhamma* in practice.

At least Mr H.A. Overstreet, author of *The Mature Mind* (New York: W.W. Norton) is optimistic about what is in store for mature minds. He said:

The characteristic knowledge of our century is psychological. Even the most dramatic advances in physics and chemistry are chiefly the application of known methods of research. But the attitude toward human nature and human experience that has come in our time is new. This attitude could not have come earlier.

Before it came, there had to be long preparation. Physiology had to be a developed science; for the psychological person is also physiological. His mind, among other things, is a matter of brain tissue, of nerves, of glands, or organs of touch, smell and sight.

It was not until about seventy years ago that physiology was sufficiently developed to make psycho-physical research possible, as in the laboratories of the distinguished German psychologist, William Wundt. But before physiology, there had to be a developed science of biology. Since brain, nerves, glands and the rest all depend upon processes the science of the living cell had to have its maturing before a competent physiology could emerge. But before biology, there had to be chemistry, and before chemistry, physics; and before physics, mathematics.

So the long preparation goes back into the centuries. There is, in short, a time clock of science. Each science has to wait until its hour

strikes. Today, at least, the time clock of science strikes the hour of psychology, and a new enlightenment begins. To be sure, the interests explored by this latest of the sciences are themselves old; but the accuracy of research is new. There is, in brief, a kind of iron logic that is in control. Each science has to wait for its peculiar accuracy until its predecessor has supplied the data and tools out of which its accuracy can be made. The time clock of science has struck a new hour: a new insight begins to be at our service.

May I say that it is the *Buddha-Dhamma* which should be studied by one and all for a new insight into the realities of human nature. In Buddhism we have the cure for all the mental ills that affect mankind. It is the evil forces of the mind (past and present) that are responsible for the present state of affairs all over the world. By inspiring a strong sense of Buddhism in the minds of the people during the most critical

days of Burma some two years ago, we have been able to get over the crisis.

Nowadays, there is dissatisfaction almost everywhere. Dissatisfaction creates ill-feeling. Ill-feeling creates hatred. Hatred creates enmity. Enmity creates war. War creates enemies. Enemies create war. War creates enemies and so on. It is now becoming a vicious circle. Why? It is certainly because there is lack of proper control over the mind.

What is man? Man is after all mental forces personified. What is matter? Matter is nothing but mental forces materialized, a result of the reaction of moral (positive) and immoral (negative) forces. The Buddha said, "*Cittena niyyati loko*," "The World is mind-made." [13]

Mind, therefore, predominates over everything. Let us then study the mind and its peculiar characteristics and solve the problem that is now facing the world.

There is a great field for practical research in Buddhism. Buddhists in Burma will always welcome whoever is anxious to have the benefit of their experience.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have made an attempt to give you the best of what I know about Buddhism. I shall be glad to give any interested person such further explanation on any point that he may wish to discuss. I am grateful to you for your kind attendance and the interest taken in my lectures. May I again thank the clergy of the church for the permission so kindly given for this series of lectures on their premises.

Peace to all beings.

### **FOOTNOTES:**

12. See Kindred Sayings, II, pp. 23f.
13. Kindred Sayings, I, p 55; Gradual Sayings, II, p. 185.

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**Next come two dialogues with Webu Sayadaw**

**The Essential Practice**

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**Part I**

**Dhamma Discourses of  
Venerable Webu Sayadaw**

translated from the Burmese by  
**Roger Bischoff**  
© 1995–2009

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## **Introduction**

The Webu Sayadaw was born on the sixth day of the waxing moon of Tabaung of the Burmese year 1257 (17 February 1896) in Ingyinbin, a small village near Shwebo in upper Burma. He was ordained as a novice at the age of nine and was given the name Shin Kumara. At the age of twenty, he was ordained as a full member of the Sangha, and was thereafter addressed as U Kumara. ("Webu Sayadaw" is a title meaning "the holy teacher from Webu," given to him after he became an established teacher.)

U Kumara went to Mandalay to study at the famous Masoyein monastery, the leading monastic university of the time. In the seventh year after his full ordination, he left the monastery to put into practice what he had learned about meditation.

After leaving the Masoyein monastery, U Kumara spent four years in solitude. Then he went to his native village of Ingyinbin for a brief visit, where he taught the technique of meditation he had adopted. "This is a shortcut to Nibbana," he said, "anyone can use it. It stands up to investigation and is in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha as conserved in the scriptures. It is the straight path to Nibbana."

Among the thirteen practices called the *dhutanga*, which are often taken up by monks living in solitude to combat laziness and indulgence, is the practice of never lying down, not even to sleep. Monks taking up this particular practice spend the nights sitting and meditating to rid themselves of sleepiness. The Webu Sayadaw is said to have followed this practice all his life. He taught that

effort was the key to success, not only in worldly undertakings, but also in meditation, and that sleeping was a waste of time.

I was told by one of his disciples that on the occasion of his ordination under the Webu Sayadaw, he had a mosquito net and a pillow, in addition to the monk's requisites. The Webu Sayadaw, pointing at them, asked him what they were. "A pillow and a mosquito net, sir." "Are these part of the monk's requisites?" "No, sir." And the newly ordained monks decided to give these "luxuries" back to his family.

The Webu Sayadaw emphasized the practice of meditation as the only way to bring the teachings of the Buddha to fulfillment. The study of the scriptures, though helpful, is not indispensable for the realization of Nibbana. The technique of

meditation taught by the Webu Sayadaw is one of forty techniques mentioned in the scriptures for the development of *samadhi* or concentration. It is called *anapana sati* and requires one to be aware (1) that one is breathing in while breathing in, (2) that one is breathing out while one is breathing out, (3) of the spot or area which the stream of air touches while one is breathing in and out. In the *Visuddhimagga* Buddhaghosa describes sixteen ways of approaching this meditation, but the Webu Sayadaw kept reminding his disciples they needn't know about all of these; all they really needed to know was the reality of in-and-out breathing.

U Hte Hlain, the collector of some of the discourses contained in this book, writes: "The Webu Sayadaw preached sometimes five, sometimes ten times a day. Seven main points were always included in his

discourses. If the Webu Sayadaw gave 10,000 discourses in his life, then these points were expounded by him 10,000 times. He always included them, even if he had to repeat them again and again. He always explained the teachings in simple terms, so that the ordinary man could understand. He tried to explain the Dhamma in such a way that the most difficult thing became easy."

The seven points are:

- (1) One can only expect the fulfillment of one's aspirations if one is perfect in morality.
- (2) When practicing generosity (*dana*) in the religion of the Buddha, the mental attitude and volition involved are very important.
- (3) Believing in the law of kamma, one should always act with an upright mind.

(4) One should not aspire to any happiness of either the human or celestial worlds — which are impermanent — but only to Nibbana.

(5) Because of the arising of the Buddha we have the opportunity to practice right conduct (*carana*) and wisdom (*pañña*) fully and thereby to benefit greatly.

(6) From the moment we are born to the moment we die, there is the in-breath and the out-breath. This is easy for everybody to understand. Every time we breathe in or out, the breath touches near the nostrils. Every time it touches we should be aware of it.

(7) While we are walking, working, doing anything, we should always be aware of the in-breath and the out-breath.

Most of these discourses were given before large audiences during the Webu Sayadaw's travels in lower Burma. The person or persons answering the Webu Sayadaw are lay-people sitting up front and close to him.

Some of the discourses are translated from a collection compiled and introduced by U Hte Hlain and published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Burma. Others have been transcribed from tape by the translator and then rendered into English. The titles of the discourses have been added and were not assigned to them by the Webu Sayadaw himself.

Because they were delivered extemporaneously the discourses are repetitive and were edited slightly so that they lend themselves better to reading. Care was taken, however, to edit only obvious repetitions

and only when they had merely rhetorical value. The reader may still find the discourses repetitive, but with some patience and "mindfulness" he will discover in them many insights into practical Buddhism.

The Webu Sayadaw was not a scholar, and his discourses do not cater to the intellectual who prefers the study of Buddhist philosophy to the practice. His refreshing simplicity, his patience, his lovely sense of humor, and his humility — illumine a side of Buddhism which cannot be perceived by reading treatises and texts. Moreover, the statements of the people in the audience offer us a glimpse of how Buddhism is practiced in Burma today.

The Webu Sayadaw undertook pilgrimages to the Buddhist sites of India and Sri Lanka. He passed away on 26 June 1977 in the meditation center at

Ingyinbin, his native village. He was believed to be an arahant, i.e., a person who has in practice fully understood the Four Noble Truths and attained the end of suffering.

— Roger Bischoff

## **What Really Matters**

**WEBU SAYADAW:** You have taken up moral conduct (*sila*). Now that you have undertaken to perfect yourselves in morality, fulfill it to the utmost. Only if you fulfill morality to the utmost will all your aspirations be met. You will be happy now and in the future.

Nothing but the teachings of the Buddha can give you real happiness, in the present and in the

remainder of *samsara*, the cycle of repeated birth and death. The teachings of the Buddha are enshrined in the Tipitaka, the three baskets of the scriptures. The Tipitaka is very extensive. If we take the essence out of the Tipitaka we shall find the thirty-seven factors of awakening.<sup>1</sup> The essence of the thirty-seven factors of awakening is the eight constituents of the Noble Eightfold Path. The essence of the Noble Eightfold Path is the threefold training — the higher morality, the higher mind, the higher wisdom. The essence of the threefold training is the one Dhamma or Universal Law.

If your body and mind are under control, as they are now, there can be no roughness of physical or verbal action. This is the higher morality (*adhisila*).

If morality becomes strong, the mind will become peaceful and tranquil and lose its harshness. This is

called the higher mind or the concentrated mind (*adhicitta*). If concentration becomes strong and the mind stays one-pointed for a long time, then you will realize that in a split-second matter arises and dissolves billions and billions of times. If mind (*nama*) knows matter (*rupa*), it knows that matter originates and disintegrates billions and billions of times in the wink of an eye. This knowledge of arisal and disintegration is called the higher wisdom (*adhipañña*).

Whenever we breathe in or out the incoming and the outgoing air touches somewhere, in or near, the nostrils. The sensitive matter registers the touch of air. In this process, the entities touching are matter and the entity knowing the touch is mind. So do not go around asking others about mind and matter;

observe your breathing and you will find out about them for yourselves.

When the air comes in, it will touch. When the air goes out, it will touch. If you know this touch continuously, then greed (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) do not have the opportunity to arise, and the fires of these defilements will subside.

You cannot know the touch of air before it actually occurs. After it has gone, you cannot know it anymore. Only while the air moves in or out can you feel the sensation of touch. This we call the present moment.

While we feel the touch of air, we know that there is only mind and matter. We know for ourselves that there is no "I," no other people, no man and woman, and we realize for ourselves that what the Buddha said is true indeed. We do not need to ask others.

While we know the in-breath and out-breath, there is no "I" or self.

When we know this, our view is pure; it is right view. We know in that moment that there is nothing but *nama* and *rupa*, mind and matter. We also know that mind and matter are two different entities. If we thus know how to distinguish between mind and matter, we have attained to the analytical knowledge of mind and matter (*nama-rupapariccheda-ññ*).

If we know the touch of air as and when it occurs, our mind is pure and we get the benefits thereof. Do not think that the benefits you get thus, even in a split-second, are few. Do not think that those who meditate do not get any advantages from their practice. Now that you have been born in a happy plane and have met the teachings of a Buddha, you

can obtain great benefits. Do not worry about eating and drinking, but make all the effort you can.

Is this present time not auspicious?

**DISCIPLE:** Yes, sir, it is.

**SAYADAW:** Yes, indeed! Can't those good people attain their aspiration for Nibbana who, with an open mind, receive and practice the teachings of the Buddha, just like the noble people of the past who received the instructions from the Buddha himself?

**D:** Yes, sir, they can.

**S:** So, how long does the Buddha's Teaching last?

**D:** For five thousand years, sir.<sup>2</sup>

**S:** And now tell me, how many of these five thousand years have past?

**D:** Sir, about half this time-span has gone.

**S:** So, how much remains still?

**D:** About 2500 years, sir.

**S:** What is the life-span of a human being now?3

**D:** About one hundred years, sir.

**S:** How old are you?

**D:** I am thirty-seven years old, sir.

**S:** So, how much longer do you have to live?

**D:** Sixty-three years, sir.

**S:** But can you be sure that you will live that long?

**D:** That I don't know, sir.

**S:** You don't know yourself how long you are going to live?

**D:** No, sir, it isn't possible to know this for sure.

**S:** But even as we are born we can be sure we have to suffer old age, disease and death.

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** Can we request old age, pain and death to desist for some time, to go away for some time?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** No they never rest. Can we ask them to stop their work?

**D:** No, sir, we cannot.

**S:** In that case can we be certain we have to die?

**D:** Yes, sir, it is certain that we all have to die.

**S:** It is certain that we all have to die. What about living?

**D:** We can't be sure how long we have left to live, sir.

**S:** Someone whose life-span is thirty years dies when the thirty years are up. If your life-span is forty or fifty years, you will die when you are forty or fifty years old. Once someone is dead, can we get him back?

**D:** No, sir, we can't.

**S:** However many years of your life have passed, they have passed. What is it that you have not accomplished yet?

**D:** The happiness of the path and fruition states and the attainment of Nibbana.<sup>4</sup>

**S:** Yes, inasmuch as you haven't attained the paths and fruition states yet, you have been defeated.

Have you used the years that have passed well, or have you wasted your time?

**D:** I have wasted my time, sir.

**S:** Then do not waste the time that you have got left. This time is there for you to strive with energy and steadfastness; you can be sure that you will die, but you can't be sure how much longer you have got to live. Some live very long. Some of the Buddha's great disciples like Venerable Maha Kassapa and Venerable Maha Kaccayana lived to over one hundred years of age. Some live for eighty years. To be able to live that long we have to be full of respect for those who deserve respect and we have to be very humble. Do you pay respect to your father and mother?

**D:** We do, sir.

**S:** Do you pay respect to people who are older than you or of a higher standing than you?

**D:** We do pay respect to people who are older than us or are holding a higher position than we do. Even if someone is just one day older or even just half a day older, we pay respect, sir.

**S:** When do you pay respect to them?

**D:** At night, before we go to bed, we pay respect to the Buddha and at that time we also pay respect to our seniors.

**S:** What about other times?

**D:** At other times we do not pay respect, sir.

**S:** You say that you pay respect to your seniors after you have paid respect to the Buddha. But do you show respect to those who live with you and to

those who are of the same age? If I were to put parcels of money worth \$1000 each along the road for anyone to take, would you fellows take one?

**D:** Of course we would, sir.

**S:** And if you found a second, would you take that too?

**D:** Of course we would, sir.

**S:** And if you found a third bundle of bank notes, would you take that as well?

**D:** We would take it, of course, sir.

**S:** After having got one, wouldn't you want someone else to have one?

**D:** We wouldn't think that way, sir.

**S:** If you happened to be with a friend. Would you let him find one bundle of notes thinking, "I shall

pretend not to see that one. After all, I have got one"? Would you let him have one or would you grab them all and run for it?

**D:** I would grab all I could get and run for it, sir.

**S:** Yes, yes, you fellows are not very pleasant. When it comes to money, you are unable to give to anyone. But then you say that you are respectful and humble just because you pay respect to the Buddha in the evenings. If you cherish thoughts such as, "Why is he better off than I am? Is his understanding greater than mine is?" then your mind is full of pride. If you pay respect to your parents, teachers, to those older, wiser or of higher standing, without pride, then you will live to more than one hundred years. If you show respect for such people, will you get only \$1000? Will you get only money?

**D:** It will be more than just money.

**S:** Yes, indeed! And though you know what really matters, you wouldn't even give \$1000 to someone else, but rather you would run and get it for yourselves. When the Buddha, out of compassion, taught the Dhamma, did everyone understand it?

**D:** No, sir, not everyone understood it.

**S:** Why is this so?

**D:** Some didn't listen to the Buddha, sir.

**S:** Only if you take the teachings of the Buddha for yourselves can you attain any of the types of awakening: the full awakening of a Perfect Buddha, the awakening of a Paccekabuddha, the awakening of a chief disciple, of a great disciple of any ordinary arahant disciple.<sup>5</sup> If you want to attain one of these types of awakening, you can. Through the

teachings of the Buddha you can attain happiness now, a happiness that will stay with you in the future. How long does it take for a paddy seed to sprout?

**D:** Only overnight, sir.

**S:** It takes only a day for it to sprout. Now, if you keep the seed — a good quality seed, of course — after sprouting and do not plant it, will it grow?

**D:** No, sir, it will not.

**S:** Even though you have a good quality seed, if you do not plant it, it will not grow. It is just the same with the teachings of the Buddha; only if you accept them will you understand them. If you learn how to live with the awareness of mind and matter arising, what do you achieve?

**D:** This awareness is called *vijja*, sir, true understanding.

**S:** If one lives without the teachings of the Buddha, what do you call that?

**D:** That is *avijja*, sir, ignorance.

**S:** If you live all your life with *vijja*, understanding of the Buddha Dhamma, then where will you go after death?

**D:** To some good existence, sir.

**S:** What will happen after a life full of ignorance?

**D:** One will go to the lower realms, sir.

**S:** Now, suppose an old man about seventy years old is paying respect to the Buddha. While doing so, he cannot keep his mind focused on the Dhamma,

but he allows it to wander here and there. If this old man dies at that moment, where will he go?

**D:** He will go to the lower worlds, sir.

**S:** Really? Think carefully before you answer. He is paying respect to the Buddha and he is meditating. So where will he go if he dies at that moment?

**D:** He will go to the lower worlds, sir.

**S:** But why?

**D:** Because his mind is wandering all over, sir.

**S:** Yes. What are the qualities arising in the mind of a person living in ignorance?

**D:** They are greed, aversion, and delusion.

**S:** What is greed (*lobha*)?

**D:** Greed is to want something, sir.

**S:** Greed includes any liking, being attracted by something, wanting. One who dies with any liking or wanting in his mind is said to be reborn as a ghost. But what is aversion (*dosa*)?

**D:** Aversion is enmity, sir.

**S:** Yes, aversion is the cause of your fighting. Aversion arises because you do not get what you want and what you get you don't want. Dislike is aversion. If you die with dislike in your mind, you are reborn in hell. Delusion (*moha*) is ignorance about benefits derived from being charitable, being moral and practicing meditation. If you die with delusion in your mind, you will be reborn as an animal. Nobody — no god, no Deva or Brahma — has created body and mind. They are subject to the law of nature, to arising and dissolution, just as the Buddha taught. If a person dies concentrating on the

awareness of mind and matter and knows their arising and dissolution, then, according to the teaching of the Buddha, he will be reborn as a man, Deva or Brahma. If someone is going where he wants to go, does he need to ask others for the way?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** Does one have to ask others, "Do I live with knowledge or in ignorance?"

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** No. Indeed not. Therefore, work hard to bring the perfections (*parami*) you have accumulated in the whole of samsara to fruition. Be steadfast in your effort.

Act as the wise people of the past did after receiving the teachings directly from the Buddha; they worked for Nibbana. Knowing that you too have

been born in a favorable plane of existence, nothing can stop you from working up to the attainment of the paths, fruits and Nibbana.

Practice with strong effort and with steadfastness and make sure that not even a little time is wasted. Advise and urge others to practice also. Strive with happiness in your heart and when you are successful, be truly happy.

### **A Roof that Does Not Leak**

**WEBU SAYADAW:** The contents of the Three Baskets of the sacred scriptures taught by the Buddha are so vast that it is impossible to know all they contain. Only if you are intelligent will you be able to understand clearly what the monks have been teaching you out of great compassion. You have to pay attention only to this.

**DISCIPLE:** Sir, we don't quite understand what you mean by: "You have to pay attention only to this."

**SAYADAW:** Let me try to explain in this way. If you build a house, you do put a roof on it, don't you?

**D:** Yes, sir, we cover our houses with roofs.

**S:** When you put the roof on you make sure that it is watertight, don't you? If you cover your house well and it rains a little, will the roof leak?

**D:** No, sir, it won't.

**S:** And if it rains very hard, will the roof leak?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** And when the sun burns down, will it still give you good shelter?

**D:** It will, sir.

**S:** Why is this so? Because your roof is well-built. Will you be able to know whether your roof is leaking or not after it rains?

**D:** Yes, sir, when it rains it is easy to find out.

**S:** You see, you think that the teachings of the Buddha are vast and varied, but really they are just one single way of escape from suffering. Only if you take up one object of meditation given by the Buddha and pursue it with steadfast effort to the end, can you justly claim that your roof is not leaking anymore. If your roof is not rain-proof yet, you have to be aware of this. There must be many houses in your neighborhood and they all have roofs. What are the materials used for roofing?

**D:** There are corrugated iron roofs, there are tiled roofs, there are houses roofed with palm leaves of bamboo.

**S:** Yes, of course. Now, if a palm-leaf roof is well built, is it reliable?

**D:** Oh yes, sir, it won't leak.

**S:** If a tin roof is well assembled, is it rain proof?

**D:** Yes, sir, it is.

**S:** What about a well-made tile roof?

**D:** No rain will come through, sir.

**S:** What about bamboo roofs or roofs made out of planks?

**D:** If they are well done, they are watertight, sir.

**S:** So, if you take the roofing material you like best and build a good roof, will it give you shelter when it rains and when the sun shines?

**D:** If we build it well, it will not leak, sir.

**S:** We are building roofs because we don't want to become wet when it rains and we want to avoid the scorching sun. The teachings of the Buddha are available now. Take up one of the techniques the Buddha taught, establish steadfast effort and practice. Only if you are steadfast does your practice resemble a roof, and greed, aversion and delusion cannot leak through. Only if the roof is not leaking can we say that we are sheltered. If the roof is still leaking, is this because it is good or because it is not so good?

**D:** Because it is not so good, sir.

**S:** Is it leaking because the palm leaves are not a good roofing material?

**D:** No, sir, palm leaves are a good roofing material.

**S:** Or is it because corrugated iron, or tiles, or bamboo, or planks are not suitable as roofing materials?

**D:** No, sir, all these are quite all right.

**S:** Then why is the roof leaking?

**D:** Because it isn't well built, sir.

**S:** But, of course, the mistake is made now. Is it difficult to repair it?

**D:** If one is skillful, it is quite easy, sir.

**S:** Tell me then, if it leaks in a certain place, what do you have to do?

**D:** We have to patch up the leak, sir.

**S:** It is just the same in meditation. Now that you exert effort, there is no leak; you are safe. If greed, aversion and delusion still drip in despite your practicing the teachings, you have to be aware of the fact that your roof is not yet rain-proof. You have to know whether the roof you built for your own house is keeping the rain out or not.

**D:** Sir, we all have the roofing materials, but the roof is still leaking. We would like to know the technique of building a good roof.

**S:** Don't build a thin shaky roof, build a thick strong roof.

**D:** How are we to build a thick strong roof, sir? While we are sitting here like this, we still have to endure being drenched by the rain.

**S:** The wise people of old practiced the teachings without allowing their efforts to diminish in any of the four postures — sitting, standing, lying down and walking — and they kept up such a perfect continuity of awareness that there never was any gap. You too have to practice in this way. The disciples of the Buddha established awareness of the spot and then did not allow their minds to shift to another object. Now, can the rains of greed, aversion and delusion still affect those who are steadfast?

**D:** No, sir, they can't.

**S:** If you establish the same quality of awareness whether sitting, standing or walking, will the rain still be able to penetrate your protecting roof?

**D:** Sir, please teach us the technique which will give us shelter.

**S:** Tell me: all of you are breathing, aren't you?

**D:** Oh yes, sir, all are breathing.

**S:** When do you first start breathing?

**D:** Why, when we are born of course, sir.

**S:** Are you breathing when you are sitting?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** Are you breathing while you are standing, walking and working?

**D:** Of course, sir.

**S:** When you are very busy and have a lot to do, do you stop breathing, saying, "Sorry, there is no time to breathe now; too much work!"

**D:** No, sir, we don't.

**S:** Are you breathing while asleep?

**D:** Yes, sir, we are.

**S:** Then, do you still have to search for this breath?

**D:** No, sir, it's there all the time.

**S:** There is no one, big or small, who doesn't know how to breathe. Now, where does this breath touch when you breathe out?

**D:** Somewhere, below the nose and above the upper lip, sir.

**S:** And when you breathe in?

**D:** At the same spot, sir.

**S:** If you pay attention to this small spot and the touch of air as you breathe in and out, can't you be aware of it?

**D:** It is possible, sir.

**S:** When you are thus aware, is there still wanting, aversion, ignorance, worry and anxiety?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** You see there, you can come out of suffering immediately. If you follow the teachings of the Buddha, you instantly become happy. If you practice and revere the Dhamma you remove the suffering of the present moment and also the suffering of the future. If you have confidence in the monks and the teachers, this confidence will result in the removal of present and future suffering.

The only way out of suffering is to follow the teachings of the Buddha, and at this moment you are revering the teachings by establishing awareness. Do you still have to go and ask others how the Dhamma, if practiced, brings immediate relief from suffering?

**D:** We have experienced it ourselves, so we don't have to go ask others anymore.

**S:** If you know for yourselves, is there still doubts and uncertainty?

**D:** No, sir, there isn't.

**S:** By keeping your attention at the spot for a short time only you have understood this much. What will happen if you keep your mind focused for a long time?

**D:** Understanding will become deeper, sir.

**S:** If your time were up and you would have to die while your attention is focused on the spot, would there be reason for worry?

**D:** There is no reason to worry about one's destiny if one dies while the mind is under control.

**S:** This frees us from suffering in the round of rebirths, and having discovered this for ourselves, we need not ask others about it. If we establish strong and steadfast effort in accordance with our aspiration for awakening, is there still cause for doubt: "Shall I get it or shall I not?"

**D:** No, sir, we have gone beyond doubt.

**S:** So, then you have full confidence in what you are doing and due to your effort the "basis of attaining perfection through effort" factor (*virīya iddhipada*) arises. Suppose people come and say to you, "You haven't got the right thing yet; how could you ever succeed?" Will doubts arise in you?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** You know that though you are certain that you will be able to reach the goal with your practice, other people might tell you that you will not.

**D:** Sir, knowing for oneself, one will not have doubts, whatever people may say.

**S:** What if not just a hundred people or a thousand people come to tell you that what you are doing is no good, but the whole town?

**D:** Even if the whole town comes, no doubt will arise, sir.

**S:** Suppose the whole country comes to contradict you?

**D:** Even so, sir, there will be no space for doubt to arise, because we realize this happiness for ourselves.

**S:** Yes, you know how much effort you have established. But don't think that your effort is perfect yet. You are only at the beginning. There is still much room for improvement. While you sit, walk, stand and work, it is always possible to be aware of the in-breaths and out-breaths, isn't it?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** If you focus your attention on the spot, are you unhappy?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** Does it cost you anything?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** The men, Devas and Brahmas who received the teachings after the Buddha's awakening practiced continuously and therefore their respective

aspirations for awakening were fulfilled. What the Buddha taught is enshrined in the Tipitaka. If you keep your attention focused on the spot and on the in-breath and out-breath, the whole of the Tipitaka is there.

**D:** We don't quite understand this, sir.

**S:** Oh dear, why shouldn't you understand this? Of course you understand.

**D:** But we would like to be certain that we understand this in detail, sir.

**S:** You have understood already. Have you checked whether all of the Buddha's teaching is contained in this awareness?

**D:** But, sir, our awareness is not deep enough to check this.

**S:** But you can talk about the Buddha's discourses, the monks' rules and about Abhidhamma philosophy.

**D:** When we discuss these, we just talk without really knowing.

**S:** Talking into the blue... Now, if you keep your attention at this spot, can you tell me whether the whole of the teaching is present there?

**D:** We don't know, sir.

**S:** Are you not telling me because you are tired?

**D:** No, sir, we aren't tired. We would like to answer.

**S:** If we want to make an end to suffering, we have to observe the behavior of mind and matter. All say this. Matter is composed of eight basic elements. Mind and mental concomitants are fifty-three in

number. All of you can tell me this off the top of your head.<sup>6</sup>

You are intelligent. When others discuss the teachings you correct them and tell them where they went wrong and where they left something out. You refute them and criticize them. You are debating like this, aren't you?

We said just now that the thing that doesn't know is matter and the entity that knows is mind. These two entities must be evident to you. Under which of the two comes the spot below the nose? Is it mind or matter?

**D:** I think that the spot is matter. The bodily sensitivity (*kaya-pasada*) through which we feel touch sensation is matter. But those who study Abhidhamma philosophy tell us that we are just concepts (*paññatti*)<sup>7</sup> and that the spot too is just a

concept, sir... When we have debates with people who are proficient in the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* we become angry and agitated and get little merit.

**S:** If you can't keep your attention on the spot, you will get involved in discussions, of course.

**D:** But, sir, if we don't answer, we have to admit defeat.

**S:** Tell me, what do you have to do when you are hungry?

**D:** We have to eat rice, sir.

**S:** What about monks, what do you have to give them to still their hunger?

**D:** We have to give them "oblation rice," sir.<sup>8</sup>

**S:** Are the oblation rice they eat and the rice you eat two different things?

**D:** They aren't different, sir. In order to show respect to the monks we call their rice "oblation rice," but it is the same as the one we eat.

**S:** So, whether we call it "rice" or "oblation rice," it will still our hunger.

**D:** Yes, sir, both fill the stomach.

**S:** Now what about the nose, the spot? You can call it by its conventional name or you can talk about sensitive matter. It's just the same as with rice and oblation rice. Is it worth arguing about?

**D:** No, sir, there is no need for long discussions.

**S:** Having understood this, will you stop arguing, or will you carry on with your debates?

**D:** No, sir, we will not debate, but those Abhidhamma students will.

**S:** In that case you just don't take part in the discussion of such issues. You have known all along that rice and oblation rice are the same, but we have to talk about it so that you understand. Now, what do we call the entity that is aware?

**D:** It is called mind, sir.

**S:** Only if you have gained such control over your mind that it doesn't jump from one object to another, are you able to distinguish clearly between mind (*nama*) and matter (*rupa*).

**D:** Yes, sir, now we are able to distinguish between mind and matter.

**S:** Is this knowledge of mind and matter you have gained called understanding (*vijja*) or ignorance (*avijja*)?

**D:** It is understanding, sir.

**S:** Is there still ignorance present when you are able to distinguish clearly between mind and matter?

**D:** No, sir, ignorance has run away.

**S:** When you concentrate at the spot, there is understanding, and ignorance has been banned. Now, if we continue to concentrate on the spot, will ignorance spring back up again?

**D:** No, sir, it won't.

**S:** Yes, you see, you have to establish understanding in this way. You have found it now; don't allow it to escape again. Can you suddenly be overpowered by delusion if your understanding keeps growing moment by moment? Do good people still have to moan and complain, saying that it is difficult to get rid of ignorance once they have

been given the teachings of the Buddha, which are the tool to overcome and defeat ignorance?

**D:** No, sir, they shouldn't complain. All they need to do is to put forth effort.

**S:** So, you realize that all that the Buddha taught is contained in this meditation. If you put forth effort, establish yourselves in perfect effort, then you will reach full understanding. You told me that many types of material are suitable to build a good roof. Not only a tin roof or a palm-leaf roof are safe, you can choose from many different materials. I think you have collected quite a variety of good roofing materials. Now you have to build a roof that really protects you against rain. Once you have built a good shelter you won't get wet and you won't have to suffer the heat of the sun anymore. If you build your shelter in the jungle, will it be good?

**D:** Yes, sir, it will.

**S:** If you build your roof in a city?

**D:** It will be safe, sir.

**S:** Does it make any difference whether you build your shelter in this country or in any other country?

**D:** Sir, it will give shelter here and there.

**S:** Are you happy if you're drenched by rain or if you have to live under the scorching sun?

**D:** No, sir, I would be unhappy.

**S:** In that case, put forth full effort so that you do not have to suffer sun and rain ever again.

## **The Flight of an Arrow**

**WEBU SAYADAW:** You have taken the precepts of morality. Having taken the precepts, practice

them. Only if you fulfill the perfection of morality completely can you be successful in attaining all the various aspirations for awakening without exception.

Now that you have understood that you have been born at an auspicious time and into a good existence, take up the practice of the teachings of the Buddha with all your strength and establish yourselves in them. The noble disciples of the Teacher practiced without slackening in their effort and were mindful in all the four postures of the body, without ever resting. They worked with steadfastness and they all attained the goal they desired. You too should take up this practice with this strong will to reach your goal.

What is this practice without break or rest to be compared to? It is like the flight of an arrow. If we

shoot an arrow with a bow, we take aim, according to our desire. Now tell me, does the arrow at times slow down and then speed up again after we shoot it off? Does it at times take rest and then again proceed toward the target?

**DISCIPLE:** Sir, it flies fast and at a steady speed.

**SAYADAW:** And when does it stop?

**D:** It stops only when it hits the target, sir.

**S:** Yes, only when it hits its aim, its target, does it stop. In just the same way did the direct disciples of the Buddha strive to attain the goal they had taken as their target. Moving at a steady pace without a break, without interruption, they finally attained that type of awakening they desired in their hearts.

Of course, there are various types of awakening. All of them can be attained if you work without resting.

If you work for the full awakening of a Perfect Buddha, you have to work continuously. If you work for the awakening of a Paccekabuddha, you have to keep up the continuity of practice. If you aim for the awakening for a disciple arahant, you have to practice steadily, just as an arrow flies steadily. If you practice with steadfastness you will be able to attain your goal.

Though your practice without interruption, you will not get tired or exhausted. As you take up the teachings of the Buddha, incomparable happiness will come to you. Some people think that the Buddha taught many different things. You all remember some parts of the holy scriptures as the monks out of great compassion taught them to you. At times you may think, "The teachings of the Buddha are so vast and manifold. I can't follow and

understand all this, and therefore I can't attain my goal." Or some people say, "What is true for oneself one can only know oneself." Or others, "I can't work because I can't feel the breath yet." Now tell me, what is your excuse?

**D:** Saying that we have to make a living to maintain our body, we postpone meditation from the morning to the evening and from the evening to the morning. In this way we keep delaying the putting forth of effort.

**S:** And what else do people tend to say?

**D:** Some say they can't meditate because of old age and some are afraid it will make them ill.

**S:** What do those say who are young still?

**D:** That they can't meditate because they have to study. While they are young and healthy, they want to enjoy themselves.

**S:** And if you are unwell and ill?

**D:** Then, sir, we worry. We call the doctor and think about medicine, but we still don't practice.

**S:** And when you have recovered?

**D:** We shall somehow manage to postpone meditation day by day and let time pass.

**S:** But do you actually want to attain happiness, don't you?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** So, if you really want it, why then postpone striving for it?

**D:** I don't really want it, sir.

**S:** Does this apply to you only or to all of you here?

**D:** There must be some in this audience who really aspire to attain happiness and others like me who are not so serious about it.

**S:** If you put forth effort as you are doing now, you will of course get it. But thoughts and doubts may come up in your minds: "Will I have to suffer?"; "Will this practice be trying?" You have already acquired some knowledge of the Buddha's teachings according to your individual capacities. Thinking about these, however, will slow down your progress. So listen well to the teachings now and practice.

If you practice, you will arrive at your goal, and the reality of it may or may not correspond with your thoughts about it. Only when you know for yourselves will you also know that your thoughts

and speculations about the goal were not correct. All of you know from Dhamma lectures that if you follow the teachings of the Buddha, you will gain great happiness in the present and in the future. In fact, you are all preachers of the Dhamma yourselves.

Don't you think that thinking and speculating will slow your progress down? If you think and analyze, will every thought be correct?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** If you establish your goal as I told you and keep thinking about your wanting to attain it, will this help?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** So, will you continue to think and ponder?

**D:** If we analyze and think all the time we shall go the wrong way, sir.

**S:** Once we start thinking there will be very many thoughts. Will much of what we think be of use to us?

**D:** It is difficult to think useful thoughts. Thoughts often become quite useless and misleading.

**S:** The noble monks of the community have expounded the real and true teachings to you and still your thoughts are apt to mislead you. How is this possible?

But tell me, you are from Kemmendine, right? Your house must have a garden and a fence around it. Isn't that so?

**D:** Yes, sir, this is correct.

**S:** On which side of the compound is the gate?

**D:** I have one gate opening to the south and one opening to the north, sir.

**S:** How many stories does your house have?

**D:** It is a single storey house, sir.

**S:** On which side do you have your door?

**D:** There are two doors, sir, one in the west wall and one in the south wall.

**S:** So, now we know that you live in Kemmendine, that you have a fence around your garden with gates to the north and south. Your house is a one storey building and has two doors facing south and west respectively. You see, because you told me, I know everything about your place. Now my knowledge

and your knowledge about your house are about the same, aren't they?

**D:** They cannot be, sir.

**S:** But why? You know your village, your garden and your house, and you told me that you live in Kemmendine and you described your garden and your house to me as you know them. Therefore I know your village, your garden and your house. I know the reality about it, as you do.

**D:** You don't know it in the same way I know it, sir.

**S:** My dear friend, why should what I know be different from what you know? Just ask me where you live and I shall reply that you live in Kemmendine. Furthermore, I know about your garden and house just as you do. What is there that you can tell me that I don't know already?

**D:** Even if I told you the house number and the street it is on, you wouldn't be able to find the house, sir.

**S:** Tell me then, what more do you know about this matter than I know?

**D:** I can't tell you more about it, sir, but I know more because I have actually been there.

**S:** In that case I shall think about it and figure out where Kemmendine is.

**D:** You can't find out by thinking about it, sir.

**S:** I shall think a lot and for a long time. Some of it is bound to be right. I will think about a house in Kemmendine with two gates, two doors, one storied. Will some of my findings about your house be correct?

**D:** I don't think so, sir.

**S:** Is it so difficult then? Well, I'll think in many different ways; some of them will turn out right. I shall ponder over this problem for about one year. Will I find the answer then?

**D:** If you just think about it, sir, you won't find it. But if you please, come and look, you will really know for yourself.

**S:** Now, what if I were to think about it really deeply for about forty or fifty years? Or better, if I don't just think but also talk about it, will I come to know it then?

**D:** Even if you think and talk about it, sir, you'll never get there.

**S:** Then please tell me where Kemmendine is.

**D:** From here you would have to walk towards the southwest.

**S:** So, if I walk in a southwestern direction, will I get there?

**D:** Yes, sir, you will, but you will still not find my house.

**S:** Well, I'll begin now, I'll think very deeply and at the same time recite your instructions and descriptions. In this way I will come to know.

**D:** No, sir, I don't think so.

**S:** You tell me that know all this about your house, but if I repeat what I know from you, then you tell me that I am talking into the blue. I cannot bear this.

**D:** Sir, you simply repeat what you heard, but you don't actually know.

**S:** So, all I say about this house is correct, but he claims that I still don't know it the way he does. I don't know whether this is true... But now, if I were to think about it deeply and recite my thoughts, would there still be a difference in understanding? Or if I were to recite all you said day and night, would it still not be possible for me to really know?

**D:** Sir, you would still not know it in the same way you would if you went there yourself.

**S:** Before you told me about your house I didn't know anything about it, but now I know something.

**D:** Yes, sir, this is true, but if you came to see it you would know everything about it.

**S:** Tell me, if I were to walk according to your directions, would I arrive at your house?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** And if I didn't know the house number?

**D:** You would wander aimlessly, sir.

**S:** And if you go there?

**D:** I head straight for my house, sir.

**S:** Will you worry about how to get there and whether you are on the right road.

**D:** If you come with me, sir, you can't get lost, because I have been there before.

**S:** The Buddha taught what he had realized for himself. Now, all of you are able to accept good advice. The Buddha's teachings are vast. There is the Suttanta, the Vinaya and the Abhidhamma. You need not study all these. Choose one object of meditation, one technique that suits you, and then work with firm determination. Once you have

established yourselves in this way and you arrive at the goal, you will understand deeply and completely. But even now, before I finish speaking, you do get understanding and this immediate understanding is called "*akaliko*,"<sup>9</sup> immediate understanding.

Our teachers and parents, who instruct us out of great compassion and love, tell us: "Learn this and that," and when we go to bed at night they call us: "Why didn't you pay respect to the Buddha before going to bed? Come, pay respect." If we don't follow their instructions, they may even have to beat us. They have to do this even though they don't wish to. Through their help our resistance is overcome. But of course, we get immediate knowledge of the Buddha Dhamma only if we are

interested in it ourselves. When does it actually become *akaliko*, immediate?

**D:** Only when we really find the Dhamma, sir.

**S:** And when will we really find the Dhamma?

**D:** After having worked for it, sir.

**S:** At what particular time do we have to practice in order to be successful?

**D:** The hour of the day or night is of no importance. If we practice and then reach the goal we shall gain immediate knowledge, sir.

**S:** It is very easy. You have received the teachings of the Buddha. All you have to do is to make efforts in the same way the disciples of the Buddha did. It is easy. This is not my own knowledge. I too have learned the teachings of the Buddha and I am

passing them on to you. All of you are very intelligent and bright. What I am telling you, you know already. Why do you think the Buddha taught the Dhamma?

**D:** He taught people to be continuously aware of mind and matter.

**S:** He taught so that people who desire to attain the goal may be able to do so. He taught because he wished them to be able to travel on the path. But some of you may say that this is not a good time to practice. The mind is not settled with all this coming and going of people. "We shall meditate when the mind is tranquil," you may decide. And the mind becomes tranquil after some time, what will happen?

**D:** When the mind is calm, we will go to sleep, sir.

**S:** Oh really, and this you call meditation?

**D:** Sir, we are only perfect in talking about meditation.

**S:** And then, when you have a bad conscience about not having practiced and decide to go to a meditation center, what do you take along?

**D:** We take food with us, sir.

**S:** Tell me, after having taken the precepts, do you stuff yourselves?

**D:** Yes, sir. The ladies offer food and we just eat. We start early and then we continue eating right up until twelve noon.<sup>10</sup>

**S:** Do you eat more than on ordinary days?

**D:** Oh yes, sir, much more.

**S:** Tell me now, do you stop eating at noon?

**D:** Well, you see, sir, some say that even then it is alright to continue eating. Once one stops, then one can't start again after twelve noon, but, if I started before noon I can continue eating even after midday, I've heard.

**S:** What about you, do you carry on eating?

**D:** I continue eating even while we are talking like this, sir.

**S:** And what do you do after you have finished eating?

**D:** Then my stomach is full, sir, so I lie down flat on my back.

**S:** And then?

**D:** Then I sleep, sir.

**S:** And when do you wake up again?

**D:** At about three or four in the afternoon, sir.

**S:** Do you meditate then, being fully awake and alert?

**D:** No, sir, then I ask for some juice and lemonade.

**S:** Do you drink a lot or just a little.

**D:** I drink to the full, sir.

**S:** Even if you drink a lot, some will be left over. Do you share that with others?

**D:** No, sir, I drink it all myself because I like to keep it for myself.

**S:** But do you feel good if you drink too much?

**D:** No, sir, not very well.

**S:** Tell me, do you meditate then?

**D:** Well, sir, as I don't feel very well I have to lie down.

**S:** And then what happens?

**D:** I sleep again, sir.

**S:** And when do you get up?

**D:** The following morning, sir, when the sun rises. I say to myself, "Well, look, the sun has risen," and I get up and have breakfast.

**S:** Now tell me, if you don't attain Nibbana, do you think that is because there is no such person as a fully awakened Buddha and that Nibbana doesn't exist?

**D:** No, sir, it's because I eat too much.

**S:** Well, you do make some efforts, but this greed is still a little strong, I think. Tell me, when you start

to meditate and someone whispers near your ear, do you hear it or not?

**D:** If the concentration is not so good, we prick up our ears and listen to what is being whispered, sir.

**S:** When you hear this whispering, do you accept it and respect the people who are whispering?

**D:** Sir, when the determination to meditate is strong, then I get angry at those who are whispering.

**S:** Meditators get angry?

**D:** If they come and whisper in the place where I am meditating, I will of course get angry, sir.

**S:** Is it skillful to get angry and think, "Do they have to whisper here? Where is this chap from anyway? Who is he?" Will a meditator who reacts

in this way attain his goal quicker? If he becomes angry and then dies, where will he be reborn?

**D:** He will be reborn in the lower worlds, sir.

**S:** Even if he is observing the eight Uposatha precepts?

**D:** If he becomes angry, he will go to the lower worlds even then, sir.

**S:** How should we approach the problem of being disturbed by whispers while we are meditating? We should reflect in the following way: "I have come here to meditate. My fellow meditators are whispering and I hear them. If the others find out that I pay attention to whispers, I will feel ashamed because all will know then that I don't make sufficient effort. I shall make more effort." We should be grateful to the people who show us

through their whispering that our effort isn't sufficient. If your effort is good, your concentration will be good and you won't hear anything. Being grateful, you should hope that these people continue talking and you should continue to meditate. There is no need to go up to them and actually say, "Thank you." Simply continue to meditate, and, as your awareness of the object of meditation becomes continuous, you won't hear disturbances anymore. Would you hear people, if they spoke quite loudly?

**D:** If they spoke quite loudly, I think I would hear them, sir.

**S:** Again, we have to be grateful: "They are telling me to improve my efforts." Being grateful to those people, I steady my mind and focus on the spot again. To meditate means to be so closely aware of the object that it never escapes our attention.

**D:** Please, sir, explain to us how to be so closely aware of the object.

**S:** You just have to keep your attention fully collected, concentrated on the spot. All of you have been breathing ever since the moment you were born. Can you feel where the air touches as you breathe in and out?

**D:** Sir, for me the touch sensation is most evident under the right nostril.

**S:** Not in two places?

**D:** No, sir, only in one place.

**S:** Yes, it touches at this small spot when you breathe in and when you breathe out. Tell me, does it enter with intervals or is it a continuous flow?

**D:** There are intervals, sir.

**S:** Is it the stream of air that is interrupted or the awareness of it? Is the touch of air continuous while you breathe in and out?

**D:** It is uninterrupted, sir.

**S:** Then you have to know this flow of air without interruption. Don't look elsewhere. Just know this touch of the breath. If you can't feel it, then try touching the spot of contact with your finger. When you know the sensation of touch, then take your finger away and stay with the awareness of touch-feeling at the spot. You have to become aware of the touch of air which is continuous as being continuous. If you are aware of this spot without a gap in the continuity of awareness, will you still hear whispers?

**D:** No, sir, I don't think so.

**S:** You know this spot below the nose and above the upper lip so exclusively that you don't hear sounds anymore. Is this spot matter (*rupa*) or mind (*nama*).

**D:** It is matter, sir.

**S:** And the entity that knows, that is aware, what is it?

**D:** That is mind, sir.

**S:** So, if you are aware of the spot without interruption, you are continuously aware of mind and matter, are you not?

**D:** Yes, sir, this is true, sir.

**S:** If you are aware of mind and matter in this way, you know that there is no self, there is no man, there is no woman, there are no human beings or Devas or Brahmas. This is what the Buddha taught. If we

are aware of mind and matter, do we still think in terms of human beings, Devas and Brahmas?

**D:** No, sir, we don't.

**S:** Is it easy to be thus aware?

**D:** Yes, sir, it is easy.

**S:** This is knowing things as they are. Mind and matter arise without interruption. They arise and then disintegrate. How many times do they disintegrate in a flash of lightning?

**D:** I have heard that they disintegrate one hundred billion times in the wink of an eye, sir.

**S:** Tell me then, how can you count to one hundred billion in the wink of any eye?

**D:** I can't, sir.

**S:** Suppose you were given one hundred billion gold coins and would have to count them, how long would it take you?

**D:** I think it would take about a month, sir. Even if I were to count greedily day and night, it would take about that long.

**S:** The peerless Buddha penetrated all this with his own superknowledge and then was able to teach it. But what can we know for ourselves? We can know mind and matter simultaneously, And what will we get from this awareness? We will be able to understand the characteristic of their behavior. You needn't do anything special. Just practice as you are practicing now. Keep your attention focused on the spot and as you gain the ability to keep your attention with the awareness of breathing and the spot, mind and matter will talk to you.

**D:** Do we have to think of impermanence when one in-breath comes to an end, sir?

**S:** It is good if you think of impermanence as a breath comes to an end. If you know impermanence in this way, will you be able to attain Nibbana?

**D:** Not yet, sir.

**S:** So if you can't attain Nibbana yet, keep concentrating on the spot and you will come to know.

**D:** What do we have to know as being impermanent, sir?

**S:** You say that sugar is sweet, don't you? But if I have never before tasted sugar, how are you going to explain sweetness to me?

**D:** It is much better than even palm sugar, sir, but we can't explain it so that you will really know.

**S:** But you have tasted it, so why can't you tell me about it?

**D:** Well, sir, sugar looks like salt, but ants don't go for salt while they do like sugar. But this won't help you very much, sir. You have to taste it.

**S:** So salt and sugar look similar. Now, if I eat some salt, calling it sugar, will I taste sugar?

**D:** No, sir, salt will remain salty.

**S:** In that case I'll think that sugar is salty.

**D:** This is just the same as us, not knowing how to recognize impermanence, sir.

**S:** When we talk about the outer appearance of sugar, there are many possibilities of mistaking

something else for sugar. Only if you explain the taste of sugar properly can I understand.

**D:** We would like to advise you to eat some sugar, sir.

**S:** Will you have to sit next to me while I'm eating it and say, "It is sweet, it is sweet..."?

**D:** If I recited this, it would just bother you, and it isn't necessary to do this for sugar to be sweet. As soon as you put sugar into your mouth, you will be able to taste its sweetness, sir.

**S:** But let's say there is a jungle bhikkhu who wants to taste sugar. Will the sugar think, "This is a jungle bhikkhu. I shan't be fully sweet for him. I shall be only half as sweet for him as I am for people in towns"?

**D:** Sugar isn't partial, sir, it is a sweet for one as for the other.

**S:** It is just the same with the awareness of mind and matter. If you keep up this awareness you will taste the Dhamma immediately, just as you taste sweetness when you eat sugar. Is it possible that you still mistake salt for sugar?

You go to the market so many times and you can easily distinguish between salt and sugar. You are not going to buy salt for sugar. The peerless Buddha penetrated the truth and really knew it. He can distinguish between what is liberation and what is suffering, and therefore he gave this liberation to human beings, Devas and Brahmas alike. He just asked them to "eat." Just eat it, it is real. Will you remain here without eating, fearing that it could turn out not to be true liberation?

**D:** We haven't reached that point yet, sir. We are just listening to your words.

**S:** Eat as I told you. You will not go wrong. And why can't you go wrong? Because mind and matter are actually arising and disintegrating continuously.

Why should you concentrate on the spot, though you don't know liberation yet? If you don't eat something, will you ever know what it tastes like? You know a lot about the Dhamma. You know about mind and matter; you know what the Suttas are, and you know about the Vinaya, and you know the Abhidhamma. You know, "This is serenity meditation, and this is insight meditation."

**D:** But, sir, all this is mixed up in our head like a giant hodgepodge.

**S:** Let it be a mix-up. Pay attention to this spot only, as I taught you. Later, this mix-up will be disentangled, everything will fall into place. If we go east we will get to a place in the east; if we go west we will arrive at a place in the west. The spot is like a vehicle. If you want to go to Mandalay, you have to board a train to Mandalay and stay on it. The spot is like the train; don't leave it. Keep your attention focused on it very closely. This is all I have to say. There is nothing to be said apart from this.

Do you know the eight constituents of the Noble Eightfold Path? How do you think they apply to this practice of concentrating on the spot?

**D:** If one concentrates on the spot with right concentration then one attains the knowledge of right view, sir.

**S:** Are the other elements of the Noble Eightfold Path pertinent to this practice?

**D:** Sir, the eight constituents of the Noble Eightfold Path are: (1) right view; (2) right thought; (3) right speech; (4) right action; (5) right livelihood; (6) right effort; (7) right mindfulness; (8) right concentration.

When our mind is fixed on the spot, we don't think unskillful thoughts in anyway. Therefore right thought is there, sir. As we are not talking at all, we don't speak lies and therefore there is right speech. As awareness of breathing is a good action, right action is included in this practice. There is right livelihood too, as we are not trying to make a living by deceiving others, sir. We are putting our entire effort into keeping our attention at the spot, so there is right effort. Because we focus our attention on the

breath without letting go, we have right mindfulness. And as the attention remains at the spot without wandering here and there, we have attained right concentration.

**S:** So you think this is like a boat or a train?

**D:** Yes, sir, it is like a vehicle that takes a person to his goal.

**S:** Do not leave this vehicle, do you understand? Keep your attention firmly focused here, on the spot, and never leave this spot. In this way you will reach your goal. Sometimes, you may become impatient traveling on the train to Mandalay and think, "I want to go to Mandalay, but is this train really going there or is it going to Rangoon?" If this happens, will you get off? Don't! Continue on your journey and you will see that you will eventually arrive in Mandalay.

If you get fed up and bored, don't leave the train. When you are enjoying yourselves, don't get down. When you are ill, stay on the train and stay also when you are strong and healthy. When you have plenty of company, stay. When you are all alone, don't leave. When people say unpleasant things to you, persist, and when they speak to you respectfully, don't get off your train. What would you do if people were to hit you because they don't like you?

**D:** Sir, I think I would run away.

**S:** Just keep your attention on the spot. Even if robbers hit you, they can't strike down this awareness.

**D:** True, sir, but I think this awareness would go if they would strike at me.

**S:** Not necessarily. Our Bodhisatta,<sup>11</sup> in one of his lives, became the king of monkeys. One day he found a brahman who had fallen down a precipice in the jungle and was helpless and certainly going to die down there. This brahman was lamenting his fate and crying, "Oh poor me, I have fallen into a chasm a hundred yards deep. I shall certainly die down here. Oh poor me, oh oh oh... My relatives and friends, my wife and children, don't know about my misfortune. Nobody is here to help me. Oh oh...", and he cried.

Now noble beings are always concerned with the welfare of all beings, without exception. And as the Bodhisatta is such a noble being, he who was then the monkey-king felt pity for the brahman in the same way he would have felt pity for his own children. And so he climbed down the precipice and

went up to the brahman. "Do not fear, do not despair, I won't let you die. I shall take you back to the place you want to go," he said to the brahman to reassure him to cheer him up. And he meant it, too.

But he wasn't ready yet to put him on his shoulders and carry him up the rocks, because he was afraid that he might fall and the brahman might be hurt. He took a big rock of about the same weight as the brahman, put it on one shoulder and tried to carry it up the precipice, jumping from rock to rock. Only after having passed this test did he carefully take the brahman on his shoulders and climb back up, jumping from one boulder to the next.

After this great effort, the monkey-king was exhausted. He was happy while performing this good action, but he was still happier when he had accomplished it and had saved a life. He was

confident that the brahman he had saved from certain death was trustworthy, and said, "After carrying you up, I am a little tired. Please keep watch for a while so that I can rest." Then he placed his head in the brahman's lap thinking himself well protected from all the dangers of the jungle. But while the king of the monkeys slept, the brahman thought, "I shall go back home soon, but I have nothing to give my wife and children. I shall kill this big monkey and give his flesh to them as a gift." He took the rock the Bodhisatta had carried up for the test-run and dealt the Bodhisatta's head a deadly blow. He didn't do this hesitatingly, feeling sorry for his savior, but he hit him hard, so as to kill him with the first blow.

When the Bodhisatta felt the pain of the blow, he quickly climbed the next tree and he asked himself

who or what had attacked him. He then saw that there was no enemy around, but that the brahman himself had tried to kill him, and he thought to himself: "Yes, there are people like this in the world, too." As the Bodhisatta was thinking this, the brahman started lamenting again, exclaiming that he was lost in this big jungle and that he would perish after all. But the monkey-king said to him, speaking from the tree, "Don't worry; don't be afraid. I have promised you I shall take you back to your home and I shall not break this promise. I shall take you home. I can't carry you on my shoulder anymore, but as you opened my skull, there is blood dripping to the ground continuously. Just follow the track of blood I shall make for you from up in the trees."

This is how the Bodhisatta acted. He took all this on himself because his goal was Omniscience,

Buddhahood. He worked on all the ten sublime perfections — the *parami*.

Did the Bodhisatta rescind from accomplishing the good deed he had undertaken to complete because he was afraid that the man who had attempted to take his life might again try to kill him? Did he abandon him in the jungle?

**D:** No, sir, the Bodhisatta led the brahman home with great loving-kindness, in order to perfect his *parami*.

**S:** You see, if one aspires to omniscient Buddhahood, one has to fulfill the perfections, the ten *parami*, in this way, without ever taking a break, without ever resting. Otherwise one can't attain Buddhahood. Do you understand? A Bodhisatta never rests, he never becomes lax, he works on the ten perfections all the time.

You told me only a moment ago that you couldn't keep up your awareness if robbers would attack you and try to kill you?

**D:** I couldn't keep it up as yet, sir.

**S:** But you are aspiring to awakening, aren't you?

**D:** Yes, sir, I am.

**S:** If you want it you can achieve it. If you keep your attention focused as I taught you, you will get much out of it, even if people should hit you, pound you and destroy you. Have you heard the story of Tissa Thera?

**D:** No, sir, I haven't.

**S:** Tissa Thera received the teachings of the Buddha and appreciating their value, he thought: "Now I can't continue living in this grand style," and he

gave all his possessions to his younger brother. Then he became a monk and went to live and meditate in the jungle with his begging bowl and his set of three robes.

Now his brother's wife thought, "It is very enjoyable to possess all the riches of my husband's older brother. If he remains a monk we shall have these riches for the rest of our lives. But maybe he will not attain awakening, and then he will possibly return to laylife. So, I had best have him killed." And she gave money to some robbers and said to them, "Go and kill Tissa Thera. I shall give you more money after you have completed the job."

So, the robbers went to the forest where Tissa Thera lived and grabbed him. He said, "I don't possess anything, but if you want to take my bowl and robes, please do so." The robbers replied, "We only

want to kill you. Your brother's wife gave us money to kill you and she will give us more still after we have completed the job. That is why we have to kill you." Tissa Thera thought, "I am not emancipated from suffering yet," and he felt ashamed of himself. He said to the robbers, "Yes, yes, you have to kill me, but please give me until dawn and then only make an end to my life." The bandits replied, "All are afraid of death, and if this monk escapes, we shall not get our money." "You don't trust me? Well, I shall make you trust me," Tissa Thera replied, and he took a rock and smashed both his legs. Then he said, "Now I can't run away anymore, so please don't kill me until dawn."

Though the dacoits were very rough people, due to the loving-kindness of Tissa Thera they felt

compassion and decided to let him live until day-break.

Tissa Thera admonished himself: "Venerable Tissa, there is not much time left, dawn is close. Put forth effort!" He put forth strong effort in the practice of the Buddha's teachings and as he worked with a steady mind, dawn arrived. As the sun rose, he fulfilled his aspiration and attained happiness. "I have attained release from the cycle of birth and death," he rejoiced. He then woke the robbers and said, "The day has dawned, rise and come!" and he was full of joy. Now, is Tissa Thera a real disciple of the Buddha, an arahant?

**D:** Yes, sir, he is.

**S:** Whose development is faster, do you think, that of someone who meditates with both legs broken, or that of someone who meditates as you do?

**D:** Sir, I would prefer to meditate without first breaking my legs.

**S:** Tissa Thera got it before dawn even with both his legs broken. Will you get it before the day breaks?

**D:** I don't think that I could get it, sir. It will take me longer than that. We take it easy, sir. If one doesn't have to break one's legs, effort is less and progress therefore slower.

**S:** In that case, you are not so eager to attain your goal quickly.

**D:** Sir, we like to go slowly, slowly.

**S:** Well, then maybe you *should* break your legs and then meditate.

**D:** I don't have the courage to do that, sir. I say that I do aspire to Nibbana, but in my mind I am still

fearful. I don't have the strength to accept being killed after breaking my own legs.

**S:** In that case, work just the same, but without breaking your legs.

**D:** We shall work hard in the way you taught us, sir. We are emulating Visakha and Anathapindika, sir.<sup>12</sup> It says in the scriptures that they are enjoying a good life in the Deva planes now and we would like to have that same type of enjoyment also, sir.

**S:** They are enjoying a good life after having attained a lot. But you have not attained to the same stage yet, have you? Are you really doing as they did?

Anathapindika went to Rajagaha as a banker on business. Only when he reached there did he come to know that a Buddha had arisen in the world. He

didn't go to Rajagaha to meditate or to pay respects to the Buddha. But when he was told about the Buddha, he went to see him immediately, in the middle of the night. He had to leave the city walls to go to the place where the Buddha resided. When he stood before the Buddha, he attained what he had aspired for. If someone drops everything and hurries to the Buddha in the middle of the night, is the effort of that person great or small? Do you think he ever let go of Buddha as the object of his mind while on the way to see him?

**D:** No, sir, he didn't.

**S:** Now, tell me about yourselves.

**D:** We lose the awareness of the object while we walk, or while we think and so on, sir.

**S:** If you want to become like Anathapindika, you have to strive as he strove.

**D:** Anathapindika had to go through a cemetery on his way to the Buddha, sir. That much we can do too, sir.

**S:** It is said that Anathapindika began his meditation in the first watch of the night and attained the path and fruit of stream-entry when the day broke. But if you can't get it by day break, never mind. It is good enough if you can get it by the time the sun has risen and it is light. Tell me, will you work so that you can attain the goal by tomorrow?

**D:** Sir, we too shall go through a cemetery to come to your monastery and in this way we shall emulate Anathapindika.

**S:** Did he allow the continuity of awareness to be interrupted?

**D:** He didn't, sir, but we are doing the same as he did only as far as the way is concerned.

**S:** If you really want to become like Anathapindika, you have to work. If you work, you can fulfill your aspiration. If you don't work, you won't achieve anything. Is it not possible for you to concentrate on the spot where the air touches?

**D:** It is possible, sir.

**S:** To become like Anathapindika, you have to practice as I taught you. Will you tell me tomorrow that you attained your goal?

**D:** I shall tell you that I haven't attained it yet, sir.

**S:** Do you know what Anathapindika did after he had attained the first stage of awakening? He thought, "This is incomparable! My king, my people, my relatives, my sons and daughters, city dwellers and country folk, all of them have not yet heard that a Buddha has arisen. I want them to experience the same bliss I have experienced. Now, how can I accomplish this? I have to invite the Buddha and make him stay for some time in my city, Savatthi, and all can go and meet him. The Buddha, out of great compassion, will teach them, and at the end of the teaching human beings and gods alike will attain the bliss I have attained."

Anathapindika understood the ultimate truth and he knew the reason he understood it. He invited the Buddha in order to help others to understand also. He had rest houses built every ten miles along the

road from Rajagaha to his native city. In Savatthi he built the Jetavana monastery for the Buddha, and he arranged everything in such a way that there was a place for everyone. He provided everything, giving to all, from beggar to the king. Thanks to Anathapindika's arrangements, the people who met the Buddha on his journey to Savatthi gained benefits also. During the Buddha's journey, many people, Devas and Brahmas attained what they had aspired to. How many do you think were those who benefited?

**D:** We don't know, sir.

**S:** How many human beings, how many celestial beings attained Nibbana then?

**D:** A great many, sir.

**S:** How many beings fulfilled their aspiration in the wink of an eye? It was 180 millions of Brahmas and countless millions of Devas. How many beings attained awakening as time went by?

**D:** They must be innumerable, sir.

**S:** Anathapindika continued to support the teachings of the Buddha and due to his effort many attained the deathless. Understanding this, you have to make a lot of effort to attain your goal by tomorrow. Will you do this?

**D:** Do not think too highly of me, sir. I don't think I am able to get it by tomorrow.

**S:** You are hungry and your wife offers you food, but still you don't eat?

**D:** When it comes to food, I will even force my way to the table, sir.

**S:** Do you eat even though you don't want to eat or because you want to eat?

**D:** Because I want to eat, sir.

**S:** For how long is your hunger appeased if you eat once?

**D:** For about half a day, sir.

**S:** For how long will your hunger be stilled if you eat the way Anathapindika ate?

**D:** For the remainder of the cycle of birth and death, sir.

**S:** Tell me, what is the best for you: the food your wife offers you and that keeps you satisfied for half a day, or what the Buddha offers you and that keeps you satisfied for the remainder of the cycle of birth and death?

**D:** I have to answer that what the Buddha offers is best for me, sir.

**S:** You do eat what your wife offers you. What then do you do with the food the Buddha offers?

**D:** I'm hesitant about that, sir. That's the reason why I don't approve of myself, sir.

**S:** Good, good. Work hard. You put so much effort into doing all these other things because you don't view mind and matter properly. But you do feel respect for the Buddha. Having decided to meditate, meditate. As you meditate you may find that your limbs grow aching and stiff. Now, don't think: "Why do I get this pain? Is it dangerous?" But make a resolve: "Let it be dangerous! If I have to die, so be it. I have died in the past also." How many times do you think you have died?

**D:** Innumerable times, sir.

**S:** Tell me, have you ever died while you were meditating?

**D:** No, sir, I have died while being unskillful only. That is why I am still so agitated.

**S:** So, if we have to die, how should we look at it? "I have never died so far while meditating. I shall not wait until dawn. Let me die even right now, so that I can get the experience of dying while meditating." You should think in this way. If you die while meditating, will you become miserable?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** If you live a life of laziness and sloth, will you become happy?

**D:** No, sir. I shall continue going round in the cycle of birth and death, sir.

**S:** "I have never before, in the whole cycle of birth and death, had stiff and aching limbs because of meditation. It is good if I experience these troubles now." Thus should you look at your pains. Even though your limbs ache, do not give up. Know that wise people of the past have walked on the same path.

You will have to work. If you only talk about putting forth effort, you will not attain anything. Only if you meditate can you come to understand. Now you are probably thinking: "We want to meditate, but this venerable monk is talking for a long time." So now focus your mind as the Buddha taught and meditate with firm effort and with perseverance.

## Notes

1.

*Bodhipakkhiya dhamma*. These are thirty-seven aspects of practice taught by the Buddha. They include the four foundations of mindfulness, the four great efforts, the four bases of accomplishment, the five spiritual faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of awakening and the eight constituent of the Noble Eightfold Path.

2.

There is a belief in Buddhist countries that the Buddha's Teaching (*sasana*) lasts five thousand years on the human plane and then is lost.

3.

The life-span of human beings is believed to change according to the level of their morality,

ranging from an "incalculable" down to ten years and then back up again.

4.

The paths and fruits of stream-entry, once-returned, non-returned, and Arahantship.

5.

All these types of awakening are alike in that they involve complete realization of the Four Noble Truths and issue in freedom from all craving, aversion and delusion about reality. They differ in particulars. Both Perfect Buddhas (*sammāsambuddha*) and Paccekabuddhas are self-awakened, i.e., they attain Nibbana without a teacher, while disciple Arahants can attain Nibbana only after receiving the teachings of a Buddha. Though a Paccekabuddha attains awakening on his own, he does not have the ability to teach others the practice that leads to

Nibbana, while a Perfect Buddha has the capacity to establish a Dispensation and to lead many others to the goal. The different aspirations are fulfilled according to the length of time the aspirant practices the ten *paramis* or sublime virtues. To become a Buddha the period of time needed to perfect the *paramis* is far longer than the periods required for attaining Paccekabuddhahood or Arahatsip as a Buddha's disciple.

6.

The figures are references to classifications in the Abhidhamma philosophy. Abhidhamma study for lay-people was introduced in Burma by the Venerable Ledi Sayadaw, at the turn of the century. In most bigger settlements there are "Abhidhamma Associations" where especially the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* is taught.

7.

*Paññatti* denotes all ideas, notions, names, words. The *paramattha dhamma*, the ultimate truths, are not (*paññatti*) as they really exist. *Paramattha dhamma* are defined as being fourfold: consciousness, mental properties, matter and Nibbana.

8.

The Burmese language has a number of nouns and verbs which are used only by or with reference to monks. For the rice offered to monks a different word is used than for the rice consumed by the laity. There are also special "monks' words" for eating, sleeping, coming, talking, etc. The cultured Burman will not only use these special words to show his respect when talking to a monk, but will also refer to

himself as "your disciple" and to the monk as "Lord."

9.

*Akaliko*: one of the six qualities of the Dhamma. *Akaliko* literally means "no-time," immediate. One who practices the Buddha's teachings gets immediate results.

10.

The sixth Uposatha precept forbids the consumption of solid food after twelve noon. Only liquid refreshments may be taken then.

11.

**Bodhisatta**: A Buddha-to-be; an individual who, inspired by a Buddha, makes a vow to work for the attainment of Buddhahood.

12.

Visakha was an eminent female disciple of the Buddha, and Anathapindika an eminent male lay disciple.

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# The Essential Practice

## Part II

**Dhamma Discourses of  
Venerable Webu Sayadaw**  
translated from the Burmese by Roger Bischoff  
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## Extinguishing the Inner Fires

**WEBU SAYADAW:** There are duties towards the cetiya,<sup>1</sup> the Bodhi tree, towards teachers, parents, wife and children. If we fulfill these, we practice good conduct (*carana*) and this is morality (*sila*).

While we are fulfilling our duties, is it not possible to practice mindfulness of breathing also? If we do not fulfill these duties, can we say that our morality is complete? If our morality is not perfect, can we expect to experience the happiness we aspire for? If

we are not happy, if our mind is not concentrated, we can't attain insight-wisdom (*pañña*).

Today is Uposatha day.<sup>2</sup> At dawn you all woke up with the thought, "Today is Uposatha day," and you undertook to keep the eight precepts. Have you been mindful continuously since then?

**DISCIPLE:** No, sir, we haven't.

**S:** How much of this time have you spent being aware of the in-breath and out-breath?

**D:** At times we are aware, sir, at times we are not, sir.

**S:** How long did your mind stay with the object and how much time did you lose?... As you remain silent, I assume that you have been able to keep up your awareness all the time.

**D:** No, sir, we haven't.

**S:** In that case I have to ask you some more questions. How many times does your mind dissolve in a flash of lightning?

**D:** Billions and billions of times, sir.

**S:** So it arises and disintegrates billions of times. Every time the mind arises it takes some object, pleasant or unpleasant, liked or disliked. Is there a time when this constant continuous stream of mental objects is cut off or interrupted?

**D:** No, sir, the mind always takes an object.

**S:** Yes, and these good and bad friends arise in your mind due to the skillful and unskillful deeds or kamma you have done in the past. Now, if a pleasant object which we call a good friend enters the stream of consciousness, what happens?

**D:** Liking or greed arises, sir.

**S:** If liking arises, is this good or bad?

**D:** It is bad, sir.

**S:** But if a bad friend, an unpleasant mind-object arises, what happens then?

**D:** Dislike or aversion arises, sir.

**S:** If we allow aversion or dislike to arise, is this skillful or unskillful?

**D:** It is unskillful, sir.

**S:** So, if we accept the agreeable mind-objects, liking, craving, wanting and lust arise and we are creating unskillful acts which lead to the four lower planes of existence. But if unpleasant thoughts or images arise and we take possession of them, then, worry, grief, suffering, anger and aversion arise and

these mental states lead to the lower planes too. Now, at what time does no pleasant or unpleasant thought or image or sound or sight or taste or touch arise?

**D:** There is no such time, sir. The mind always takes an object.

**S:** And all these objects arising in our minds are the results of the deeds you have done in the past, in *samsara*. Be an object pleasant or unpleasant, when it arises, what do you normally do?

**D:** We react unskillfully and create bad karma for ourselves, sir.

**S:** If a pleasant object arises in the mind, liking, craving, wanting arise. This craving, what is it like? Is it not like a fire? Craving is like a fire. What about disliking, aversion and hatred?

**D:** That is also like a fire, sir.

**S:** So, whatever arises, we have to suffer the burning of fire, don't we?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** But of course, if greed and aversion have to arise, let them arise. If we are practicing the teachings of the Buddha, can they affect us? While we are practicing meditation on the breath greed and aversion don't get an opportunity to possess our minds.

The teachings of the Buddha resemble the great lake Anotatta.<sup>3</sup> If the fires of greed or aversion or any other fires fall into this lake, they are extinguished and we don't have to suffer their scorching heat any longer. Only if we know each arising of the mind in the billions of times it arises in a split-second, can

we justly say that we have achieved real wisdom and insight.

Mind and body arise billions of times in the wink of an eye, and with it your good and bad friends. If you are not watchful, these good and bad deeds of yours will again be accumulated in you billions of times. Now, who is responsible for the pleasant and unpleasant sensations that continuously arise in your body?

**D:** We are responsible for them ourselves, sir.

**S:** The debts you have accumulated in the incalculably long period of *samsara* are with you. If you don't apply the Buddha's teachings and practice, you will accumulate the same debts again and again, billions of times in every split-second. Are you able to count these debts?

**D:** No, sir, they are incalculable.

**S:** Therefore you should apply this practice the Buddha taught. If you don't accept what arises and disintegrates of its own accord then your accumulated debts will diminish and no new debts will be accumulated. If you realize this arising and vanishing for yourselves, then you don't make new debts and you get rid of the old ones. Thus you attain to the higher wisdom.

This technique of being aware of in-breath and out-breath can be practiced anywhere. You can practice it while you are alone or in company, while you are sitting, walking, standing or lying down. Wherever you are you can practice it. Now, do you have to spend money in order to practice this meditation?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** Do you have to take time off work to practice?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** In that case, what is so difficult about it? Will this practice make you feel tired?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** If you make great profit in your business and people ask you "How much gold, how much silver have you got," will you tell them?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** And why not?

**D:** One shouldn't tell others such things, sir.

**S:** Now, which jewel is more precious, gold and silver, or the Dhamma?

**D:** The Dhamma is more precious, sir.

**S:** Then don't talk to others about your achievements. What is the time now?

**D:** Seven p.m., sir.

**S:** How much time have you got left until sunrise?

**D:** About ten hours, sir.

**S:** Do you think that you can practice meditation for that long without a break? Work hard to rid yourselves of your debts. The efforts of the past and meritorious deeds performed in the past are giving their good results.

## **Work Without Wavering!**

**WEBU SAYADAW:** You have taken the precepts. Now that you have undertaken the practice of the perfection of morality, fulfill it.

What you realize when you penetrate the Four Noble Truths is called "Bodhi," awakening. You are born at a good time and in a good form of existence. Now then, emulate the wise disciples of the Buddha and put forth effort as strong as theirs, so that you may attain the awakening to which you aspired.

Those who received the teachings from the Buddha himself worked ceaselessly in all four postures sitting, standing, lying down and walking — and thus attained enlightenment. The human beings, Devas, and Brahmas who achieved their aspiration for awakening on just one occasion cannot be counted in hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands, or millions. Sometimes in one split-second an incalculably large number of beings achieved their aspirations.

From the time the Buddha attained full awakening, beings have been able to attain Nibbana. But it is not only during the lifetime of the Buddha that beings can attain Nibbana. Nibbana can be attained as long as the teachings of the Buddha are available.

The attainment of Nibbana is not bliss just for a brief moment. It will have lasting effects for the rest of the round of birth and death, *samsara*. What the Buddha taught is the way out of suffering. You don't have to know a vast amount.

If you practice one technique properly with strong and steadfast effort, you will come to know for yourselves that you are people of great strength. You will not have to ask others about the teachings, and you will not even have to tell others that you are practicing.

Once you have established effort, you will not only know what good teachers told you, but you will clearly know for yourselves how the *viriyā iddhipada* factor<sup>4</sup> arises in a split-second. You do have the fortune of being able to follow the good advice of the Buddha as his disciples did in the past.

When I increase effort, then the *viriyā iddhipada* factor will increase also. And then what will happen? I will think: "With just this much effort, the *viriyā iddhipada* factor has arisen to this extent.

But my energy is not exhausted yet. There is still more. I shall increase my effort further. And the will to increase effort will arise. At this same instant effort increases. As effort increases the *viriyā iddhipada* factor becomes stronger. When these factors have thus arisen to a very high standard, then all your aspirations can be fulfilled.

Do not take rest. Do not take breaks or time off. Work continuously. If you develop continuously, you will become happier and happier. In this way the disciples of the Buddha became very happy, never getting enough of this happiness. Do you understand?

If a king rules over a country, does he say complacently, "This one country is sufficient for me"?

**DISCIPLE:** No, sir, he doesn't remain satisfied.

**SAYADAW:** And if he rules a whole continent and has become emperor, is he satisfied then?

**D:** No, sir, he isn't.

**S:** If he isn't satisfied, what will he do?

**D:** He will try to acquire more and more territory, sir.

**S:** When a man is emperor over a continent, he wants the whole world. When he gets the whole world, he wants to become a universal monarch.<sup>5</sup> Once he is a universal monarch will he say, "This is enough" and be satisfied?

**D:** No, sir, he will not be satisfied.

**S:** All those who are perfect in their faith and have performed the highest form of generosity and demonstrated the greatest form of respect can't be satisfied. They will practice meditation and will gradually attain the stages of absorption (*samapatti*). Once they are capable of entering into the states of Nibbana, only this happiness will count for them.

Nibbana is the highest and noblest form of happiness there is. One can never experience enough of the highest and noblest form of happiness, it is said. And, not only the direct disciples of the Buddha were able to achieve it; if you put forth continuous effort to the same extent that the wise of old did, you too will experience this highest happiness, even now.

Then you will know: "I experienced a happiness that doesn't last only for a moment, or just for a lifetime, but for the remainder of my time in the cycle of birth and death. And why did I attain this happiness? Because I was born into the right form of existence, because I was born at the right time, because I put forth strong effort."

At any time, when human beings, Devas and Brahmas accepted and practiced the teachings, they

were successful. In this context, "at any time" means that whenever one undertakes this practice, he obtains understanding. The time span in which the teachings of the Buddha are available is very important and special: if you want to attain Nibbana you can, at any time. Even now it is easy.

Don't say, "This is not my cup of tea," or "This isn't suitable for me," or "I won't get anything out of this."

You do have noble aspirations and you can fulfill them now. So if you say to yourselves, "I shall take up the practice right now," don't you think you can get real understanding? You can get it practicing in a group or by yourself. Seek for yourself. Take up one of the techniques that the Buddha taught and practice it with one-pointedness and strong effort. Establish awareness of the in-breath and out-breath

and the spot where the air touches while breathing in and out.

When you are thus aware of the spot, can there still be worry, anxiety and fear? Can there still be greed, aversion and delusion? And when you concentrate your mind in this way, you revere the teachings, don't you?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** You will understand that the degree you come out of suffering depends on how much effort you put in and on how strongly the *viriya iddhipada* factor arises out of this effort.

**D:** We understand, sir.

**S:** There will be no more room for doubt because you have now practiced the technique and experienced it for yourselves, and so you know it.

You will think, "Even in such a short time I am able to come out of suffering immediately to such an extent, but my strength is not yet exhausted." And the will to exert still more effort arises, and you will become happy with a happiness of which you will never tire.

Now tell me. There is such a thing as a universal monarch in the world, isn't there?

**D:** Yes, sir, there is.

**S:** When the time is right for a universal monarch to arise, will no one notice this fact?

**D:** We don't know, sir.

**S:** About a hundred years before the universal monarch arises the good news goes around and a commotion arises. Then all set their hopes on the

universal monarch and yearn for him. They are happy, and when he is born they rejoice. What are the circumstances necessary for a universal monarch to arise?

**D:** Only when the "jewel of the wheel"<sup>6</sup> arrives, can someone become universal monarch.

**S:** Yes, before the universal monarch wheel-jewel arises he is called an embryonic universal monarch, but even then his authority, wealth and power are considerable. Will he say, "Let the universal wheel-jewel not arise, what I have got is quite enough for me"?

**D:** No, sir, he won't.

**S:** And why not?

**D:** Because he wants to become still greater through the arisal of the wheel-jewel.

**S:** So, when will the wheel-jewel come?

**D:** It will come at the right time, sir.

**S:** The wheel-jewel arises due to the merit the embryonic universal monarch has accumulated. But there are still duties for him, and having understood these duties and keeping them in mind, he has to fulfill them.

Now, say there is an embryonic universal monarch. His merit is ripe, but he doesn't fulfill the duties that are the final cause for his becoming a universal monarch. Will the wheel-jewel arise of its own accord?

**D:** No, sir, it will not arise by itself, I think. He will have to exercise himself further.

**S:** Now let's say you were the embryonic universal monarch waiting for the wheel-jewel to arise so that

you will reign over the whole world. You will still have to practice further. You have to keep precepts. But would you say, "Well, I don't need the wheel-jewel anymore. I am quite satisfied with the riches and splendor I have attained"?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** You will not give up at this point, because if you become a universal monarch you will be able to reign according to the Dhamma so that the whole world will be happy. Do you think the people of your provinces will say to you, "O embryonic universal monarch, you have got enough power"?

**D:** No, sir, certainly not.

**S:** So, what will the people say?

**D:** "Work hard and fulfill your duties," they will say, sir.

**S:** And why this?

**D:** Because they want the wheel-jewel to arise, sir.

**S:** Yes, you see, because of the power of the wheel-jewel of the universal monarch, all will experience many different types of happiness. But when one has become a universal monarch, will this give him results for the rest of the cycle of birth and death? How long can he be a universal monarch?

**D:** Only as long as the wheel-jewel is there, sir.

**S:** Yes, even a universal monarch can be on his throne at best for one life-span. But now the Buddha's teachings are available. If all the good beings who have taken birth in a happy existence take up the practice of the Buddha's teachings, they can attain even to awakening, as they aspired. But it is as with the embryonic universal monarch: he

doesn't become a universal monarch just enjoying the royal splendor that he has already achieved; he will only become a universal ruler when he has fulfilled the duties and disciplines necessary to obtain the wheel-jewel.

Now, when do you want to attain Nibbana?

**D:** Very soon, sir.

**S:** What does that mean?

**D:** Now, immediately, sir.

**S:** So, you are going to obtain it right now?

**D:** If it's possible, sir.

**S:** Well, at the time you accept it, you will reach it.

**D:** One can get it only when the ten *parami* (perfections) are completed, sir.

**S:** You still don't understand. We were talking about the embryonic universal monarch just now. He attained that point because of his fulfilling the ten *parami*. This fulfillment of the *parami* means that he can become a universal monarch for certain. But when will he become a universal monarch?

When he has fulfilled the practices and duties that cause the arising of the wheel-jewel. So, if he undertakes these, the jewel will arise. Now, don't you tell me you want Nibbana? If you practice now, you will realize it now. Will you take up practicing? But then don't get up after some time and run away.

If you want to become a sovereign ruler, what do you have to do? You have to master all the arts that are required of an accomplished prince and princess. So what do you think you have to master as sons and daughters of the Buddha?

**D:** We have to master morality, concentration and wisdom, sir.

**S:** What do you have to do to become a king? You have to study and practice the eighteen arts a king has to master. You have to learn about war-elephants, strategy, how to overcome enemies, and so forth. Once you have learned all this, what will you do when you encounter enemies?

**D:** We'll attack them, sir.

**S:** There are enemies who obstruct our progress towards Nibbana, and if we want to get there, we have to fight them. Will you fight them after having equipped yourselves with weapons?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** You will have to sit for a long time. Once the battle starts, you will have to fight for real. Once

you have deployed your troops in the battlefield, you will have to go ahead. Only if you prevail will you become a king.

**D:** We shall fight, sir.

**S:** Good, go ahead. Don't get up and run away, even if time seems long. If you fight well, you will become sovereign king.

During the time of the Buddha, people learned the teachings from the Buddha himself. The Buddha simply taught how to defeat all forms of ignorance. Do you think that all those who listened to his words and then practiced accordingly repulsed ignorance? They really refuted all forms of ignorance and therefore they were victorious. They attained supreme happiness. Establish yourselves in effort and all your aspirations will be fulfilled. You

are well equipped with weapons for the battle, aren't you?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** And you will fight, won't you? Your enemies do attack and they attack often and with full force. Are sloth, torpor and laziness friends or foes? What do you do when they come? I think it has been some time that you haven't fought a battle?

**D:** Quite some time, sir.

**S:** Tell me about the weapons you will have to use, and how you have to fight.

**D:** We have to fight for one hour every day, sir.

**S:** Only one hour a day?

**D:** We can't even always manage that much, sir.

**S:** Look here! Is this because the weapons are soft or because the warriors are soft?

**D:** We are soft, sir.

**S:** Are princes and princesses who want to become rulers soft too?

**D:** No, sir. They can't be because soft princes are defeated.

**S:** But these princes here, are they people with strength and fortitude or are they soft?

**D:** We are soft, sir.

**S:** As sons and daughters of the Buddha do you want to become sovereigns of Nibbana or do you want to remain princes and princesses?

**D:** We all want to become rulers, sir.

**S:** So, the weapon you have is good; attack! But only if you hold the weapon properly will the enemy fear you. I think you don't hold the weapon properly.

**D:** We do attack, sir, but our way of attack is weak. Out of compassion give us a powerful weapon, sir.

**S:** I can only give you the weapon. This weapon will not do anything; only if you take this weapon and make use of it can you win. No weapon is weak, and you don't have just one. You have a whole store of weapons. If I were to enumerate them, it would become a long list.

**D:** Sir, we fail because we have so many weapons.

**S:** No, it's because you don't fight. You have to fight. Do you understand? Don't you want to

become sovereign kings? Do you want to stay princes and princesses?

**D:** We try hard, sir, but we never succeed.

**S:** Yes, yes, but the weapon is fine. You don't understand because you don't fight. You are talking like most. You meditate, you put forth effort, but, in spite of that, you sound as if there was no effort. There is so much energy in you, but you don't use it. You do have energy. If you put all your stock of energy to use, you will assuredly become real sons and daughters of the Buddha, become kings by attaining Nibbana. Sons and daughters of the Buddha have the ability to accept instructions, make effort, and follow the teachings of the Buddha. All who practice the teachings, be they humans, Devas or Brahmas, can fulfill their different aspirations for Nibbana. Even if you keep up the awareness of in-

breath and out-breath throughout only one day, you will understand much. You may say that you have been meditating for so many years, but have you really ever been able to keep your mind focused for a full day?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** By one day I mean a day and a night, twenty-four hours. Now do this: practice the teachings of the Buddha to the full for one day and one night. If you have done this once, you will all be able to appreciate the value of just one single day. Some of you may have been practicing for twenty or thirty years and some even longer. But just examine yourselves. Have you really, having established yourselves in complete effort, fulfilled one single day in practice? Have you?

**D:** No, sir, we haven't.

**S:** And why have you never devoted yourselves fully for one whole day? You do have the energy required, don't you?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** You don't use the energy you have in the right place. You waste it for no purpose. Are you still going to shows and entertainments?

**D:** Yes, sir. We watch the *pwe* all night until dawn, without sleeping.<sup>7</sup>

**S:** How many nights in a row do you do this?

**D:** About two or three nights, sir.

**S:** How many shows have you seen in all?

**D:** I can't remember, sir.

**S:** You see; there you have plenty of energy. Day and night. There your effort is strong. Now, how

many times have you observed the Uposatha precepts?8

**D:** Many times, sir.

**S:** I mean, how many days have you observed the eight Uposatha precepts day and night?

**D:** We have observed them ever since we were children, sir.

**S:** How many days all together? A day I call a day and a night, twenty-four hours. Do you get a full day of Uposatha observances, if you look at it like this?

**D:** No, sir, we don't. We observed them about half a day at a time, sir.

**S:** Have you fulfilled them to the utmost during the half-day?

**D:** We are unable to do that, sir. We started this morning, sir, and shall keep it up until tomorrow.

**S:** You do have the will to work, but you don't usually use it for this noble purpose, but rather to watch *pwe*. If you die while watching a *pwe*, where will you go?

**D:** To the lower world, sir.

**S:** Do you want that?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** Even if you don't want it, it has great power over you, doesn't it? If you were to really observe Uposatha, with full effort for a whole day, could you not then fulfill your aspirations? If you keep up the practice for one Uposatha day, you will understand, you will come to know something.

The real disciples of the Buddha take the precepts on Uposatha days, and then they immediately take the object and firmly keep their attention fixed on it. Now if your attention is so firmly fixed on an object, can sloth, torpor or laziness disturb you?

**D:** No, sir, they can't.

**S:** If our attention is firmly established on the in-breath and out-breath and the point of contact, do we still hear other people's conversation?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** What if someone speaks very loudly?

**D:** It doesn't disturb us, sir.

**S:** There is no wanting, aversion or delusion. If our minds are thus purged of greed, aversion and

ignorance, will there still be loneliness, depression and laziness?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** Are we still missing company?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** Do we still want to know what others are saying?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** If someone comes and invites us out, are we excited?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** We shall not jealously guard what we have got. Good people are not like that. We share it with those with whom we live: "May they also get what I have got." Now, what will happen if all establish strong effort from sunrise to sunset, without a

break? This is a long time-span, from sunrise to sunset. But will you feel it to be long?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** "Today the time went so quickly! We observed Uposatha and the time just flew! And I really don't know why this day was so short." And after sunset you will again establish awareness of the object and then day will break and you still continue with the awareness of the spot below the nose, above the upper lip until it is light, without interruption. And you will wonder, "This night passed really quickly; now it is day again!"

This is how they used to practice on Uposatha day. When the direct disciples of the Buddha undertook to practice for a day, they practiced for twenty-four hours. And when day came, they were still not satisfied and said, "In the long cycle of birth and

death we have been doing all those other things for a long time, but not this." And they continued their work without wavering. Do you have days like this?

**D:** Our days contain some interruptions, sir.

**S:** If someone keeps Uposatha, and his mind wanders here and there — just anybody, I don't mean you — so his mind flits around here and there. But he is at a pagoda or under a holy Bodhi tree, and say he dies at that moment. What will happen to this worshiper?

**D:** He will go to the lower worlds, sir.

**S:** How many lower planes are there?

**D:** There are four lower planes, sir.

**S:** What are they?

**D:** Hell, the animal world, the plane of the hungry ghosts, and the demon world.

**S:** Now, who wants to go to hell or the animal world?

**D:** I don't, sir.

**S:** What about the ghost world or the demon world?

**D:** I don't want to go there, sir.

**S:** If you take the precepts and then don't firmly put your mind to observing the teachings of the Buddha, is that skilled or not?

**D:** It is unskillful, sir.

**S:** If someone observes the Uposatha without keeping his mind focused, where will he be reborn when he dies?

**D:** In the lower planes of existence, sir.

**S:** Are you sure?

**D:** Yes, sir, I'm sure.

**S:** If I talk about someone who doesn't keep his mind fixed on the object, I am not talking about you people; I'm talking about that (fictional) worshiper.

**D:** Sir, out of compassion, show us the good road out of the lower worlds.

**S:** Do you remember how you focused your mind as the Buddha taught?

**D:** Yes, sir, I remember.

**S:** So then, let us keep the mind on the spot. What do you think?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** But of course, now you can't do a full day anymore. But if you practice until it is light, you will have done half a day. What do you think?

**D:** We will keep our minds at the spot, sir.

**S:** What other things do you have to do tonight?

**D:** There is nothing to do at night, sir.

**S:** You have eaten, so you don't have to cook anymore, and there is nothing else to do. Very good. Will you stay here now that you have undertaken to keep Uposatha? Won't you want to go away?

**D:** We shall do our best, sir.

**S:** If you say, "We shall do our best," will there be no disturbances coming in? Will no enemy attack? Only if you really mean it are the enemies afraid. If

you are firm, they run. You know about Mahakassapa, don't you?9

**D:** Yes, sir, we have heard about him.

**S:** He met the Buddha and then practiced what the Buddha taught in order to escape from suffering. There are four bodily postures: sitting, standing, walking and lying down. Which of these is prone to let in the enemy? Laziness and sloth come in while lying down, and they come to stay, don't they? If we indulge in laziness and sloth, will we be able to develop in morality, concentration and wisdom?

**D:** No, sir, we won't.

**S:** Laziness and torpor are our enemies. Therefore, Mahakassapa rejected the one posture in which the enemy attacks and adopted the other three postures in which the enemy can't remain for long.

There are thirteen ascetic practices and Mahakassapa practiced all thirteen. Only those among the disciples of the Buddha with the strongest determination practiced the sitter's practice, i.e., did not lie down for twenty-four hours a day. If one takes up the sitter's practice and makes the strong determination not to sleep, this sloth and laziness can't overpower him. Though these noble disciples of the Buddha neither lay down nor slept, they lived long and were very healthy. Do you fight wars?

**D:** Yes, sir, we do.

**S:** Now, you are going to start your meditation. What preparations do you have to make?

**D:** We have to spread out our mat.10

**S:** If you spread out your mat before starting your meditation, soon someone will come along. Who do you think that will be? Do you think laziness and sleepiness will come your way?

**D:** If they come, sir, I shall lie down and sleep.

**S:** What will you say to them?

**D:** I won't say anything, sir.

**S:** You will say, "Ha, now only you come, I've got the mat ready a long time ago." And what are you going to do then? You are going to lie down flat on your back and sleep. If you do this, will you be able to fulfill your aspiration for Nibbana?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** If you practice without sleeping, you are establishing full effort and are always keeping your

attention firmly fixed on the object, day and night. If you practice in this way, your morality, your concentration and control over the mind, and your insight and wisdom will become stronger and stronger. They will develop from moment to moment.

If you watch a show all night, you will feel tired in the morning. But if you practice the teachings of the Buddha all night, you will experience happiness and joy without end, and you will not feel sleepy. Do you understand? This the Buddha taught — it is not my teaching. If you follow the teachings of the Buddha and don't rest until you have understood them completely, you will really know.

If people tell you, "This shade is cool," don't simply believe them, but try it out for yourselves. If you just repeat, "It is cool, it is cool..." because others

say so, you don't really know about its coolness; you merely talk about it. If someone just babbles along, he doesn't show appreciation. But if someone speaks from experience, then, will he not be able to speak with deep appreciation, and radiant happiness, and love?

So pay attention and practice. If you practice, you will reach your goal. Not just hundreds, not thousands, not ten thousands, not hundreds of thousands — all who follow the teachings will master them.

When you start to meditate you still have to check: Is everything arranged? Is there a place to sleep at night, and to rest during the day? Only when all this is in order, will you meditate, isn't it so? If you act in this way, you nurture your enemy, you call him a

friend, you love him. Once you recognize your enemy as such, do you still associate with him?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** What do you do, if he comes?

**D:** We check him and defend ourselves.

**S:** How do you defend yourselves? Will you attack him? Will you mount a full attack?

**D:** We shall repulse him, sir.

**S:** How do you repulse him? Softly, so that he doesn't get hurt?

**D:** We shall ward him off immediately so that he can't ever come back.

**S:** Yes, carry on. Cut him off and throw him overboard so that he can't ever come back. Well

then, what will you do when tiredness and laziness really arise?

**D:** I shall probably fall asleep, sir.

**S:** What about others in the audience?

**D:** I don't know, sir.

**S:** Will you recognize the enemy and destroy him?

**D:** Just so, sir.

**S:** Very good. I shall give you a simile. If a man has fallen into a deep sleep and you wake him up, he will wake up quickly. If you try and wake up someone who pretends to sleep, you will not be successful. Why is this so?

**D:** The more one works on him the more he pretends to be asleep.

**S:** Yes. Now what about you, are really fast asleep or do you pretend to sleep?

**D:** I don't know, sir.

**S:** If you are really asleep, you will simply get up, when I wake you up. Will you get up?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** Yes, and after getting up, you will go back to sleep, I think. But I'm not sure about that. I only think so.

**D:** I shall work hard as you instruct me, sir.

**S:** Put forth effort and you will become perfect. You have all you need.

All of you have acquired the elements of insight and renunciation. Because of this, you now esteem the teachings of the Buddha, you want to fulfill and

practice them. If the accumulation of the perfection of renunciation is small, your ears will be blocked to the teachings of the Buddha. For instance, if somebody tells you to come to this place, you don't want to come because you are bored by this. But now you are attracted by this teaching. All you need now is the same amount of effort that the noble disciples of the Buddha made.

When you begin to practice you may worry, "If I sit for one or two hours I am aching and stiff. How can I possibly sit for a whole day and night? I think that's quite impossible." Don't you worry like this?

**D:** No, sir, I don't.

**S:** Though you may not worry now, it will come up. But don't worry in this way. The Buddha didn't teach suffering. He taught the way leading to happiness. You may not believe this because you

think your own thoughts. But you have to work with full effort and without wavering. Now, when you meditate with full effort, the *virīya iddhipada* factor will arise. You will understand this. But when you sit all of you feel some discomfort, don't you?

**D:** Yes, sir, we do.

**S:** Even if you are aching and stiff, there is a place where there is no pain. There is sleepiness, and there is also a place where there is no sleepiness. What do you do when you are drowsy?

**D:** I go to sleep, sir.

**S:** Do you ever get enough sleep?

**D:** Yes, sir, I do.

**S:** But you sleep every day, and now want to sleep again? So you haven't actually had enough yet. If

you sleep every day, you will never get enough sleep.

So when you feel sleepy, make an effort to reach the place where there is no sleepiness and then you will need no more sleep.

Get up and walk up and down. Keep your attention at the spot where the air touches when you breathe in and out. If you keep it fixed on this spot with full effort, at some time you will find the place of no sleep. There is no "I shall not find it"; there is only a "I haven't got there yet." You will get it.

If you sleep and postpone meditation until you are rested, you will wake up when it is light and there will be no time left to meditate. I am just telling you what the Buddha taught. There is nothing I know. All the Buddha taught is true.

All of you have to make a living, work, toil, and shoulder burdens, don't you?

**D:** Yes, sir.

**S:** So let us be simple. You breathe, don't you?

**D:** Yes, sir, we do.

**S:** So, simply be aware of the in-breath, the out-breath and the point below the nose where the air touches. It goes in and out without interruption, doesn't it?

**D:** Yes, sir, that's right.

**S:** Only when your attention wanders away, the continuity is broken. Don't allow your attention to follow the breath. Your attention should always remain with this small spot. When you keep your attention there at the spot, your respiration will

become soft and subtle. Once it has become subtle, you don't have to make it rough again. The Buddha didn't say that we should make the subtle rough. When you feel the spot, touching it with your finger, your attention will not wander to other objects. Can't you fix your attention firmly on the spot with the breathing?

**D:** I can, sir.

**S:** Will greed, aversion and delusion still arise when your attention is focused on the spot? When you are well concentrated, even for a short moment, your mind is cleansed of greed, aversion and delusion for that short moment. Can't you keep your attention fixed on the spot for a longer time-span?

**D:** Yes, sir, I can.

**S:** So, make a strong effort and keep your attention there. If you keep it there, is there any drowsiness or laziness disturbing you?

**D:** They don't come up, sir.

**S:** But what will happen if you reduce your effort?

**D:** Laziness will come in, sir.

**S:** Sloth and laziness will come and your concentration will become weak. This is because you're at the beginning; later it will improve. If you view this laziness as a friend, not as an enemy, you will get used to it. Though it comes you will not get lazy anymore. When we feel sleepy, we say, "This is good. Now I want to find the place where one doesn't feel sleepy quickly. Then there will be an end to sleeping." Work, fix your attention firmly on the spot as I just instructed you and when your limbs

ache, know: "The only way out of this is to get to a place where there is no pain." Now, if the discomfort becomes very intense, is it too difficult then? It is not difficult. Don't worry about all this. Simply keep your attention on the spot. Put it back on the spot. Don't allow it to go away! If it runs away, you will never get to the place I just told you about.

Though we can't avoid being offered food and having to eat it, don't you think that we can keep our attention at the spot and eat? Do you think you will pass comments like, "Too much salt, too little salt," about the food that your wife, daughter, grand-daughter, brought from home?

**D:** I wouldn't comment, sir.

**S:** Do you think you would even notice that the food has too much salt?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** Why? Because you are aware of something far better, so you don't notice their food. If you get upset and angry about food, even though you are observing the eight precepts, and you die at that moment of anger, where will you go?

**D:** To the lower worlds, sir.

**S:** If you work with proper effort, not just superficially, will you even know whether the food tastes good or not?

**D:** No, sir.

**S:** Keep your mind steadfastly focused on the spot. Your daily work needn't suffer. It doesn't cost you anything. Others won't know about it. Will you practice the sitter's practice tonight?<sup>11</sup> Keep your attention on the spot and you will find it very easy.

If you feel drowsy, or if you are aching, say: "Good, it has come early," and then concentrate still harder on the spot.

If you reach the goal before drowsiness and discomfort come up, so much the better. If these disturbances don't manifest, don't stop working, thinking, "If they don't even come up now, there is no need to work to get to a place where they don't exist." Just keep working.

Will you undertake the sitter's practice? Or will you, when sleepiness and tiredness set in, change to another (of the four) postures and reduce your effort?

**D:** We won't reduce our effort, sir.

**S:** All of you, or just a few among you?

**D:** All of us, sir.

**S:** So, if you keep each other company, so much the better. Now, then, undertake to carry out the sitter's practice! Make it a firm vow!

You may think, "It wasn't right that we just gave in to sleepiness in the past." Well, now you have undertaken the sitter's practice, and I think it is for the first time.

**D:** Yes, sir, the first time.

**S:** This is the weapon. With this weapon you can fight your battle. With this weapon you will be victorious. If you fight with a pillow as a weapon, you cannot win.

I shall tell you a story you probably already know. At the time of the Buddha, there was a rich lady who owned a big estate. When she became old, she distributed the inheritance amongst her children.

But the children, after receiving the money, didn't care for their mother anymore. She was not treated well in the houses of her sons and daughters and she was in distress.

When she was about eighty or ninety years old, the neighbors had her ordained as a nun, as they couldn't bear to see her poverty and suffering. When the nuns of her nunnery were invited for alms food to a house one day, they all went. Only Sona Theri, our old woman, had to stay back because she was too old to go along.

Before they left the nunnery, they said to Sona Theri, "You are very old, you can't come with us. But fill the water pots for drinking water, and those for washing hands and feet, so that everything is ready when we return and also prepare some hot water."

But this nun was very old. To carry the water she had to use a small pot, and as she was working away, she got very tired. But she didn't rest. She forced herself to do what she had been ordered to do. Because she overworked herself, she fell down between the water pots and couldn't lift herself up anymore. She didn't pretend; she was exhausted from carrying water.

She had been given the teachings of the Buddha. So she thought: "Well, I can't fill the pots anymore. There is more water to be carried and I haven't prepared any hot water yet either. But I can't even get up. I will take up an object of meditation given by the Buddha." And she started meditating as we did. She fixed her attention firmly on the spot. She focused her attention so that it stayed there, whatever happened. That's all. And as she was

meditating with strong effort, she did what had to be done and made an end to suffering.

Of course she was full of the bliss of emancipation. When the others came back, they couldn't find her. They said, "Where could this old nun have gone?", and they looked all over the nunnery. Eventually they found her lying between the water pots, and they all gathered around and abused her.

"Now what about our orders? She didn't fill the pots, and there's no hot water either. She is so lazy that she just lies down and sleeps."

But the old nun was absorbed in bliss. The other nuns were worldlings, of course, and they stood there blaming her. "Look how lazy she is. No water pot is full, no hot water. Just lying around!"

You too can talk like that, can't you? It's not pleasant talk. But this nun was an arahant. She had attained Arahantship along with the supernatural powers. She said: "All you desire will be done. There will be water in the pots and there will be hot water too." And after saying this, she made a strong determination and the water pots were filled to the brim and the hot water was boiling over.

This nun was very old, and in exhaustion she fell down and could not get up again. She practiced as you are doing now. Do you hear this? How long will it take you to reach the goal, you who are healthy and strong?

**D:** We shall work hard.

**S:** Will you still say, "Oh, we are old, we can't practice anymore"? Sona Theri was eighty or ninety years old and she still carried water as she had been

told. When she fell down in exhaustion she just meditated. The disciples of the Buddha attained the goal because their power of effort was great.

You have the teachings, the technique. All you need now is effort. And why do you need effort? Because during meditation, the enemies will come to disturb you. Keep your attention on this small spot. If your limbs ache, work that you reach the state where there is no aching. When you are drowsy, work that you reach the state where there is no drowsiness. Good, good. Establish effort and meditate, work to make an end to all suffering.

## **A Happiness That Ever Grows**

**WEBU SAYADAW:** Be perfect in the practice of morality (*sila*). Only if your practice is perfect will all your aspirations of the present time and of the future be fulfilled without exception. Because this is

true, the aspirations of the good people of the past who practiced and strove were fulfilled completely. You too have to take up the practice of that morality that brought about their happiness. Work hard and perfect yourselves in it.

Being perfect in morality, keep your mind straight and practice charity (*dana*) as it pleases you, giving your possessions yourselves with sincerity to those who are worthy. Approach and give your gifts and your respect to the peerless Buddha and his teachings, keeping in mind your aspiration for awakening, Nibbana. This type of aspiration is called right aspiration. What you realize when you penetrate the Four Noble Truths is called "Bodhi," awakening.

There are different types of Bodhi: Sammasambodhi (Buddhahood), Paccekabodhi

(Non-teaching Buddhahood), and Savakabodhi (Arahatship). There are different types of Arahatship: Aggasavaka (Chief Discipleship), Mahasavaka (Main Disciples), Pakatisavaka (Disciple and Arahant). You have always to keep in mind your aspirations for Nibbana, the highest goal.

Aspirations thus formed are well formed. After having perfected yourself according to your aspiration, enter Nibbana. The noble persons who have attained Nibbana are innumerable. Why could they bring their various aspirations for Bodhi to fruition? Because they had been born into the right form of existence at the right time and because they exerted proper effort.

When is the time when these aspirations can be brought to fruition? From the moment the Buddha attained awakening many human beings, Devas and

Brahmas came to the Buddha to pay respect and to show their devotion. But no human being, no Deva and no Brahma was satisfied by merely being in the presence of the Buddha and having the opportunity to pay respect. The Buddha observed them through his mind's eye and taught them the truth which he had penetrated through his own superknowledge, his omniscience. As soon as they received the instructions of the Buddha they began to practice, to exert themselves with unwavering energy in all the four postures of the body.

This effort that is continuous, without break or pause and full of joy, is called good effort. When their effort was perfect and equal to the effort of the wise of old, they arrived at their goal in due time and all the aspirations of their hearts came to an

end. Because they had achieved this state they were exceedingly happy and blissful.

What was the nature of their happiness, their bliss? It was not happiness or bliss that lasted for only a moment or a single life time; it was that happiness that is so great that it is able to last for the remainder of *samsara*. Even if you are born in the human plane for only one life you are able to rise above the suffering of the cycle of birth and death.

In this way happiness and bliss come to you. When one has attained this happiness, when one has received the sign of bliss, when one has reached the goal, there is no jealous guarding of a secret. No, one will want all human beings, Devas and Brahmas to attain this bliss and happiness. As he knows for himself how to attain this happiness his acts of body, speech and mind will always be in

harmony with the cause of attaining Nibbana. He will act with joy as his base.

How could so many human beings, Devas and Brahmas attain such high states of bliss? Only because they knew that they were going to bring the aspirations of their heart to fruition.

What are the things that support the Buddha's teachings? They are the donation of shelter, robes, alms food and medicine for the monks. Having understood this, they practiced it. With these four requisites the wise supported the teachings of the Buddha. While they supported the teachings of the Buddha by donating the four requisites, many human beings, Devas and Brahmas received the instructions of the Buddha. They were endowed with the ability to understand and follow the instructions and they practiced with a joyful mind

without taking rest, like the wise of old. When they thus practiced they attained their goal without delay. In just one moment innumerable human beings, Devas and Brahmas fulfilled the wish of their hearts. The energetic people saw this and supported the teachings of the Buddha and established them in a very short time. But they didn't do only this, this didn't satisfy them yet. In order to strengthen and make firm the teachings they would also meditate. So they were full of good volition, and they were accordingly endowed with unwavering effort and faith.

Since the time of the Buddha there have been such noble people who supported and carried out the Buddha's teachings with supreme effort, and ever since the days of the Buddha human beings, Devas and Brahmas have been attaining Nibbana. The

number of those who have reached the goal in just a short moment can't be reckoned, let alone the number of all who have attained Nibbana.

Now the good time for all the various noble people has come. This is so, because the time when a Buddha and his teachings blossom is the good time. The existences of human beings, Devas and all the happy abodes are good. Having been born into one of these, people accepted the teachings and, as you are doing now, practiced with full effort and arrived at the goal.

After his awakening the Buddha first honored the city of Rajagaha with his presence. The king of this great city, Bimbisara, came to the Buddha, and because he received the teachings and followed them he attained the goal. He was full of bliss. He wanted others to attain the same bliss, and

understanding the reason, the cause of his happiness, he donated the four requisites. He did this so that his mother, father, grandmother and grandfather could fulfill their aspirations completely.

The Buddha, out of his great compassion, dwelt in the king's delightful garden. Humans, Devas and Brahmas came to revere him there and with great compassion he taught them what he had realized himself. In just one short moment innumerable humans, Devas and Brahmas achieved their aspirations. And after this it went on and on. The good time for all the people with noble aspirations had come!

The time at which there is a Buddha or his teaching is the good time. Human life, the life as Deva or Brahma, is a good life. Good effort is called the

effort that is established after one has received the teachings.

And what are the Buddha's teachings? What is contained in the Tipitaka and is preached and explained by noble disciples out of loving-kindness and compassion are the Buddha's teachings. They are very extensive, profound and difficult to understand. Though they are extensive, profound and difficult to understand, they really boil down to just one thing: the way of escape from suffering.

They are expounded by the wise in short and in full as time permits and everyone has knowledge of them according to his capacity. You all have some understanding of the Tipitaka, in accordance with your capabilities. If you were to talk about what you know it would never end. But you have to establish strong effort and focus your mind on one object,

and keep out all other objects. When you fix your mind on one object exclusively with strong and stable effort, then you will be established in the teachings. Isn't that so?

**U BA KHIN:** Yes, sir.

**SAYADAW:** To establish your attention, thus is effort (*viriya*). When you fix your attention on one object and no other object enters your mind and your attention is stable you reach *viriya iddhipada*, the basis of attaining perfection by effort. Because the teachings are so extensive you may think it tiresome to practice them. That is why I instruct you in this way: that you can reach the goal quickly.

What happens to the causes of suffering — greed, aversion and delusion — when you control your mind in this way?

**U:** They are cut out and become quiet.

**S:** People write and preach a lot about greed, aversion and delusion, don't they? When they debate, they talk only to win the debate, with whomever they are talking to. But if they establish awareness of breathing and make their minds stable they acquire real merit. Why don't we try to do this?

**U:** Yes, sir.

**S:** Will there be worry, fear and greed at that time?

**U:** There won't be.

**S:** No, there won't; there won't be any worry, fear and greed. If there is worry, fear and greed, are you happy or unhappy?

**U:** Unhappy, sir.

**S:** And if there is no worry, fear and greed?

**U:** Then one is happy.

**S:** If one establishes effort only for one split-second the *viriyā iddhipada* arises. It excludes worry, fear and greed and there is happiness. There are types of happiness which are not related to the happiness achieved through the Buddha's teachings, but people still call them happiness. What sort of happiness am I talking about? I am talking about the happiness of becoming a human being or Deva, of becoming a king, a rich man, a universal emperor, a Deva king, a Sakka or a Brahma. Of course their enjoyment is also called happiness. But let me give you an example.

If you were asked to bear the golden royal insignia and live in the golden palace of a country that abounded with gold, silver, gems, rice, water and

paddy, that was plentiful in everything, would you accept this offer or not?

**U:** Of course I would accept.

**S:** Of course you would accept. This country is so rich that there is absolutely nothing missing. So you would live wearing your crown in your golden palace smiling all the time. So I think, smiling like that all the time you would enjoy yourself, you would be happy, wouldn't you? Would this happiness keep worry, fear and greed away?

**U:** No, it wouldn't.

**S:** Oh, really?

**U:** It wouldn't, sir.

**S:** I mean at that moment, you see.

**U:** It wouldn't.

**S:** Why are they all smiling and happy then?

**U:** Somebody could try to usurp the kingdom. If something happens in his territory, he would have duties to fulfill.

**S:** There is nothing like that. This country is so good that there is no danger or worry of that kind. It is a very peaceful country. There is no problem at all; everything is calm and quiet. There are no troubles at all, you just have to live in the golden palace wearing your crown. So simply live there with your ministers, troops, concubines and wives. You live always with a smile on your face. Will worry, fear, greed and anxiety be kept a bay in these circumstances? You are always smiling and happy. So, do you think there is no worry?

**U:** There will be, sir.

**S:** Why?

**U:** Because there is the fear of death.

**S:** Yes, there will still be the fear of death. But you are smiling still. What is this smiling? What about greed, aversion and delusion?

**U:** They won't be kept away.

**S:** Even smiles won't keep them away?

**U:** No, sir.

**S:** What do smiles mean?

**U:** They indicate that the object of mind is greed.

**S:** Really? Is one happy if there is greed?

**U:** No, sir.

**S:** Is greed cool and pleasant?

**U:** No, it isn't.

**S:** Is it skillful or unskillful?

**U:** It is unskillful.

**S:** Are you happy when you are smiling as we just said?

**U:** No, sir.

**S:** But you are smiling great smiles, aren't you, but you aren't happy yet? You are king, aren't you? Maybe you aren't happy because you rule only one country? I'll give you another one. So?

**U:** Even then I won't be any happier.

**S:** Are you going to tell me that you don't want another country?

**U:** No, sir, I would take it.

**S:** You would take it, but still not be happy. Well, I won't give you just another country, I'll give you the

whole continent. Will you tell me that you don't want it?

**U:** No, sir.

**S:** So, you will be happier then?

**U:** I won't be happier.

**S:** Really? OK, I won't give you just another continent, but the whole planet and the wheel-jewel of the universal monarch. Now there won't be any worry or fear. With the turning of the wheel-jewel you will become universal monarch. Will you be happy now?

**U:** I won't, sir.

**S:** Will you feel calm and cool?

**U:** I won't.

**S:** Why not, disciple?

**U:** There is still the burning of greed, aversion and delusion in my mind.

**S:** Oh, is it still there?

**U:** It's still there.

**S:** So you aren't happy yet. Now, what about Sakka, the Brahmas and the Deva kings?

**U:** The same applies to them also.

**S:** We said they were happy and now you tell me the contrary?

**U:** The objects of their minds are greed, aversion and delusion.

**S:** Oh, really? Let it be. If one lives to a ripe old age always smiling and then dies smilingly, will he find peace in the cycle of births and deaths?

**U:** We won't find peace.

**S:** Where will this smiling fellow go?

**U:** When the (good) karma of this smiling person comes to an end his fate will turn.

**S:** Yes, and where will this smiling fellow end up?

**U:** With his smiling, the mind will be controlled by greed and be destined for the lower worlds.

**S:** Oh, really?... I thought that being happy was good, disciples. Is it not good? I have to ask you, "Is it good?"

**U:** (Laughing) No, it isn't.

**S:** OK, we are not happy yet. But when I asked whether we would be happy later on, you said no. There was no peace, you said.

**U:** There is no peace.

**S:** So, now there is no peace; What about later?  
Will it become just a little bit better?

**U:** It won't improve, sir.

**S:** What will happen in the lower planes?

**U:** We will go to the lower planes.

**S:** Really? So, there is no peace now, there won't be any after; what will be worse?

**U:** It will be worse later.

**S:** Oh. We all thought we were quite alright, but it is not so. But now we've got the teaching of the Buddha and we can have as much of it as we want, can't we?

**U:** We can.

**S:** Endowed with the ability to accept the teachings we can take up one technique with steadfastness.

Will the happiness that derives from this practice become less the more we use it, the more we practice?

**U:** It won't.

**S:** Will it ever be exhausted?

**U:** It won't.

**S:** Oh, really? My word, this thing is good. Isn't it, my dear disciples? And if we use it all the time, continuously, will it then get used up, will it come to an end?

**U:** It will neither diminish nor get used up.

**S:** Wait a minute. We shall keep our attention focused while we are sitting like this, but while we are standing, can we still practice this?

**U:** We can.

**S:** And when we are walking?

**U:** We can.

**S:** Yes, we have to carry the burden of our body. It is not the same as other worldly possessions. When you work hard to acquire various jewels and gold and are successful, you will store them away in a certain place, I think. But having acquired our body and mind, the five aggregates,<sup>12</sup> is it possible to live with ease, happily and without making great efforts?

**U:** It isn't possible.

**S:** We have to shoulder our burden. We can't rest for a short moment even, can we? And for whom do we have to shoulder the burden of our bodies without ever taking rest?

**U:** For ourselves.

**S:** For the five aggregates.

**U:** For the five aggregates, sir.

**S:** Yes, we have to work, disciples. If I practice this awareness a lot, then I don't want to miss this happiness that derives from it. Isn't it possible to practice this all the time?

**U:** It is possible, sir.

**S:** This is very good. Will it diminish?

**U:** No, sir, it won't.

**S:** Is it tiresome to keep up this awareness?

**U:** It isn't tiresome.

**S:** Will you use up material goods you have saved up?

**U:** No, sir.

**S:** You won't. What about your work, will it be disturbed?

**U:** It won't be disturbed.

**S:** Will the others know about our practice?

**U:** They won't notice.

**S:** Oh, the others won't notice? Yes, when we have the teachings of the Buddha and practice them continuously, when we are able to focus our mind on the object, we won't get tired, will we?

**U:** We won't, sir.

**S:** We won't spend anything; our work won't be disrupted, and others won't even notice. You receive the teachings in no time and then you say to yourself, "Now I shall follow these teachings." When you have this volition and put forth effort

then the *viriyā iddhipada* factor will arise and you will arrive at the goal in no time. If you take up the practice now, will your progress be slow or fast?

**U:** According to circumstances, sir, sometimes it will be slow, sometimes...

**S:** No! Wait, wait...

**U:** Yes, sir.

**S:** Never mind about this. If I focus my attention according to the teachings and keep it with the awareness of respiration, isn't this much possible?

**U:** It is possible.

**S:** Is this quick or slow?

**U:** It is quick, sir.

**S:** You see, if you establish effort the *virīya iddhipada* factor arises. Can you say how quick this is?

**U:** Yes, sir.

**S:** Have you put your attention there and does it stay?

**U:** Yes, sir.

**S:** As I decide to put it there, it stays, doesn't it?

**U:** It does.

**S:** So if it stays, you have reached happiness. Are you able to speak as quickly as this happiness is able to arise?

**U:** I am not, sir.

**S:** It is easy to achieve happiness if you want it.

**U:** Yes, sir.

**S:** This is the highest sort of skillfulness. Do you hear? This is the highest, the highest. Only if you have past merits can you be born as a human being and receive the Buddha Dhamma. This type of skillfulness cannot be put in numbers. Do you understand? Then the six qualities of the Dhamma are there; the qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. When the Buddha taught this, the people understood. Among the six qualities of the Dhamma, *akaliko* is one, isn't it? What does *akaliko* mean?

**U:** Immediateness.

**S:** Immediateness means that as soon as you fix your attention the results come. So, if you establish effort with intelligence the results come so quickly that you can't say "there" quicker than they come; or

you can't even think that fast. Is it so? If you establish awareness now, if you keep it here with your effort, happiness arises in the very same moment. This is immediate. Who would have to question this anymore?

**U:** Who would have to doubt his own experience?

**S:** Yes, when happiness has arisen there is no looking for it anymore. The answer comes by itself, doesn't it? It doesn't take any time. All of you are bright people and you have understood the teachings of the wise and compassionate Buddha while still young, even before the words of instruction were complete. Though you understood, at times, your mind will think as it pleases, but let us practice. What happens in the mind when we plan to practice to acquire merit? "I'll perform

merits later on, now I have to do this quickly."  
Doesn't this happen to you?

**U:** It does.

**S:** Is it good to think and speak like this?

**U:** No sir.

**S:** And when you make efforts and the *viriyā iddhipada* factor has arisen; what is the right thing to do?

**U:** The right thing to do is to practice.

**S:** Yes. If you want to become happier and happier, you have to put forth effort as soon as you have received the instructions of the Buddha and have accepted them. Then the *viriyā iddhipada* factor will arise. When you make use of this factor that arises in a split-second, does it get consumed?

**U:** It doesn't.

**S:** Do it diminish?

**U:** It doesn't.

**S:** You may decide that the happiness you've got was quite sufficient for now and the future and you say, "I don't want to progress." Can you practice and not progress?

**U:** One will progress.

**S:** If you practice not just for a short time, but longer, will you achieve only as much as you get out of a short period of practice?

**U:** One will get more.

**S:** This is good, disciple. This is possible because we are now in an auspicious era, because we are born into the right form of existence and because

we make right effort. The energetic get the true answer even without asking others. Very good, do you hear? Isn't this so?

**U:** It is so.

**S:** So, even if we live with this happiness all the time, it won't diminish, it won't be used up. And what happens if one doesn't want to progress?

**U:** It isn't possible not to progress, sir.

**S:** Yes. If you aspire to this, there must be many different troubles. Is it possible to attain Bodhi or not?

**U:** It is possible.

**S:** It is possible now and in the future. So let us say, "I don't want to progress," and then focus our minds. Is this possible?

**U:** It isn't possible not to progress if we work.

**S:** Do we achieve greater happiness the more we work?

**U:** We do, sir.

**S:** We can attain Bodhi and we can also choose the time and the place of birth. We can then choose a good existence as we wish. When you attain the happiness you desire, what else do you need?

**U:** Nothing else, sir.

**S:** You don't need anything, you just have to choose. Is choosing tiresome?

**U:** It isn't, sir.

**S:** You can drop at any time. There are four stages to Nibbana. Is it possible only for certain types of

Ariyas — those who have attained one of the four stages? Do we have to choose the state of Nibbana?

U: No, sir.

S: What about the place?

U: It isn't necessary.

S: Yes. All by yourself, without any help?

U: It's possible.

S: And in a crowd? If you go outside the pagoda it won't be possible, I think. It is easy, isn't it? The Buddha, the all-compassionate and omniscient, taught many humans, Devas and Brahmas the knowledge he had attained through penetrating the truth himself. These beings, full of confidence after receiving the teachings, were able to fulfill their aspirations.

As you establish awareness you should establish continuous effort. There are many different types of people. Some are good at reciting or reading or preaching or explaining. I have no doubt about you, disciples, with whomever you compete you will win.

**U:** Yes, sir.

**S:** Yes, though they are victorious in their talk, will they achieve anything if they don't practice?

**U:** No.

**S:** So, what's the difficulty? Talking is tiresome, isn't it? All we have to do is to make efforts to bring to fruition the aspirations we have made and work as the wise of old did. Understanding that we have to take up this work our minds will be focused. You

are very busy. You may say, "We will practice later, when we are free." Does this thought come up still?

**U:** It does.

**S:** Sometimes the mind is like that. But I think you don't actually say so?

**U:** Maybe, sir.

**S:** You even speak your mind?

**U:** We do.

**S:** Well, if you want to say this, never mind. But, for the future can't you burn these impurities out? You do have the teachings of the Buddha and when this happens to you (i.e., if you want to procrastinate), get rid of doubts. Strive to get the answers without asking others. If you focus right

now won't you get them immediately? Isn't this possible?

**U:** Yes, it is possible, sir.

**S:** Is it possible to focus as you sit here?

**U:** Yes, it is, sir.

**S:** Is it possible to maintain the happiness you achieve in this way also when you are standing up?

**U:** It is, sir.

**S:** Yes. And when you walk?

**U:** It's also possible then.

**S:** And when you carry out all your many responsibilities?

**U:** Then also it is possible.

**S:** You see, it is always possible.

**U:** If one is able to do it, it's possible.

**S:** What ability do you need? There is nothing difficult in it. Or is it difficult?

**U:** Once one has acquired proficiency in this it isn't difficult anymore.

**S:** He says that it is not possible after all to simply focus here. Just put your attention here. That's all. Well, isn't it that easy?

**U:** It is easy, sir.

**S:** It is ever so easy. The Buddha is incomparable. He accumulated virtues without ever resting. He completed his *parami* on his own working for the welfare of all. Didn't he?

**U:** Yes, he did.

**S:** And, because he could complete them, it is easy for us now, isn't it? It is easy. How is it today? You have to raise yourself happily and complete your work, and then, in accordance with your aspirations, you simply take the bliss you desire. It is ever so easy.

Don't be modest. Don't allow yourselves to think, "This is not possible for me," "This is not suitable for me," "This is not proper for us," "This is not for me." Aim at what you desire. You will get it. Isn't this so?

**U:** Yes. It is, sir.

**S:** In the days of the Buddha too, humans, Devas and Brahmas came to the Buddha, worshiped him and after they received his teachings they achieved everything; they completed all their different aspirations, didn't they?

**U:** They did.

**S:** Isn't it possible to fulfill your aspiration by establishing unwavering effort while you are a king? Can you count the names of the kings who attained complete understanding of the Dhamma?

**U:** They are without number, sir.

**S:** Many wealthy people made efforts and attained understanding while continuing their work in business, didn't they?

**U:** They did.

**S:** Isn't this possible?

**U:** It is, sir.

**S:** Can you count such wealthy people in numbers?

**U:** No, sir.

**S:** What about people who were neither kings nor rich people?

**U:** They are innumerable.

**S:** Didn't all those who received the teachings and followed them assiduously fulfill their wishes?

**U:** They did.

**S:** Humans and devas, all of them, lay disciple! What about now, lay disciple? The period of time is the same, the occasion is the same, the plane of existence is the same. If we simply establish our effort and take the teachings, do we still have to choose certain times to practice?

**U:** There is no need for that.

**S:** Really?

**U:** That is correct, sir.

**S:** Yes! The time and the form of existence is right. You can achieve your aspirations at the time you wish to. Can't you?

**U:** That's right, sir.

**S:** Yes! Do you understand? Before, they didn't practice because they were busy. How is it with this "I'll practice when I'm free"? Do we still have to set times like this?

**U:** It is not necessary to set aside certain times.

**S:** What happens if we practice only when we are free? If we stop the practice then we won't attain what we ought to attain. But now we get these jobs done and what else? We also fulfill our aspirations. We get two things done at the same time. Don't we, lay disciples? What is better: to get one thing done or to get two things done at the same time?

**U:** It is better to get two things done, sir.

**S:** You see, it's worth keeping yourself busy. But, even though I say that it's working keeping yourself busy, don't start to enjoy simply being busy. If you want to realize the teachings, don't just keep running all the time. If you establish effort at the same time, the *viriyā iddhipada* factor will arise. Make yourselves firm in this. If you say that you want to do this work, but still distract yourselves here and there, your progress will be slow, but if you establish this awareness and keep it up happily, then, you will make progress. What about this work that you can't avoid having to do?

**U:** We will also make progress with that.

**S:** Yes, lay disciples. One doesn't only get the results of this noble work, but much more. What I

say is what the Buddha preached. I'm not adding anything.

Now you are all people of great effort, aren't you? But I just wanted to warn you. What I just mentioned (about being too busy) can happen at times. When you get some holidays you decide to come here and meditate for a few days. Then, you have to go back to work and don't get time off anymore. You don't come back. Does this happen sometimes?

**U:** It does happen.

**S:** Then you abandon the meditation, don't you? Don't abandon it. Carry on with this awareness and at the same time do your work. Then you get two in one go, you get two. If you postpone being aware to your hours of leisure you get only one benefit. You

are not fulfilling aspirations which are ordinary, are you? You can attain to the highest and noblest bliss.

Now, what are these aspirations you are going to fulfill? There are the different forms of Bodhi. Bodhi means the penetrating understanding of the Four Noble Truths. If you establish effort saying that you want to get it, you can fulfill all your different aspirations for Bodhi right now. This is not ordinary.

And how are you going to fulfill them? Each type of Bodhi has to be fulfilled in its own way; Sammasambodhi as Sammasambodhi, Paccekabodhi as Paccekabodhi. Only if we understand in this way do we understand correctly. It is like planting a mature seed when it rains; a plant springs up. Here this plant is nursed well and when you go back it is deep rooted and strong. Is it

possible to explain how good this period, this time is? It is so easy now, lay disciples! How is it: is this a time when one is oppressed by worries and has to groan and moan?

**U:** No, sir.

**S:** Is it a time when we can only stare resignedly?

**U:** No, sir.

**S:** It is a time in which we can be happy and blissful immediately and never get enough of this joy. You get even more than you wanted, you get even more than you aspired for, don't you, disciple?

**U:** Yes, sir.

**S:** Oh, yes. You never get tired, not in the present and not in the remainder of *samsara*. What are the teachings of the Buddha? There is nothing that

causes stress and misery in the teachings. Is there? There isn't! It is pure happiness!

But the mind may get confused with many thoughts, and I don't think that these thoughts are very pertinent. Now, if you determine to establish this practice then I don't think that thoughts of doubt will remain at the back of your mind. Can you not be successful in this way? The mind will think what it wills. Let it! Follow the teachings, do you understand? When you arrive at the goal you will probably find that it isn't the way you expected it to be. Doesn't this happen to people?

**U:** It happened many times, sir.

**S:** Yes, it will happen. Dear lay disciples, I am telling you only a little. Those amongst you who work hard will think, "This monk is reluctant to tell us all, he is probably very unwilling to part with his

knowledge." (Everybody laughs.) You will think, "This is much greater (than he said)." When you strive for real happiness and because of this arrive at the goal, then you experience something that you cannot describe with words.

When you decide, "I'll strive so that I will know for myself," then don't procrastinate. Don't delay. Do you hear? This is so high. It is so good, lay disciples. Work hard, do you understand? You are all people of great effort, aren't you?

**U:** Almost all are, sir.

**S:** Yes, good, good. Work hard, won't you? You see, when you yourselves arrive at the goal — and for many of you even before that time — you can give this happiness to others. You will never feel reluctant to give. You will want to give a great deal of it, a great deal.

**U:** This is true, sir. In the course we are conducting now, there are three or four students who after about three days of being here cry with great sobs because they regret not having come here earlier.

**S:** Yes, it is like that.

**U:** They think, "I should have come earlier!"

**S:** Yes, this happens! Work hard in order to attain the highest. This is the perfect place.

**U:** It is a place to which you gave your blessings, venerable Sayadaw!

**S:** This is a nucleus. It is the first center of many. Do you hear me? May this happiness spread slowly out from this place. Yes, yes, you must work hard, strive diligently. Working means that you must meditate and then at times you want to take rest. Does this also happen to you here?

**U:** It doesn't, sir.

**S:** It doesn't?

**U:** If the students start to meditate at 12:30 they come out of their meditation cells only at 5 pm. At the beginning they do take breaks, but after two or three days they don't come out for breaks anymore.

**S:** Yes, you see! It's like that! The highest bliss cannot be described in words. But the mind is like a magician. Though one may be meditating here like this, calmly, negative thoughts may arise: "Oh, it is so tiring to meditate, how can I achieve anything? I cannot do it." Isn't that so?

**U:** It is just as you say, sir. They do think in that way.

**S:** Yes, your mind may be cheating you, but after having established right effort there is no cheating yourself. Or is it still possible?

**U:** No sir, it isn't.

**S:** Only before you really know can you cheat yourself.

**U:** Yes, sir.

**S:** Even so you may be saying to yourself that you are meditating too long. So, now take rest.

## **Notes**

1.

Cetiya: a mound-shaped monument often containing relics of the Buddha or enlightened monks, and treated as an object of veneration by the Buddhist community.

2.

Uposatha: There are four Uposatha days a month: the full-moon day, the new-moon day, and the days in the middle between full-moon and new-moon and between new-moon and full-moon. On Uposatha days Buddhists traditionally observe the eight precepts and go to the monasteries for meditation and to listen to religious discourses. On the full-moon and new-moon Uposathas the monks assemble to recite the Patimokkha, the code of monastic rules, and to attend to other matters of the Order.

3.

Lake Anotatta: a legendary lake in the Himalaya region.

4.

*Viriya iddhipada*: the basis of attaining perfection by effort. This is one of the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment taught by the

Buddha; it is especially appropriate for a person who makes energy his particular vehicle for attaining success in spiritual practice. See Ledi Sayadaw, *The Requisites of Enlightenment* (BPS Wheel No. 171/174, 1971), pp. 72-77.

5.

Universal monarch: a monarch ruling the whole planet righteously. Under the rule of the universal monarch there is prosperity and security for human beings.

6.

Jewel of the wheel: The wheel of the universal monarch — the symbol of his power — arises when he has fulfilled all the conditions necessary for this position. (See *Digha Nikaya* iii, 81)

7.

*Pwe*: traditional Burmese theater. It incorporates in a traditional play elements such as drama, clowns, music, dances, etc. It usually lasts all night until sunrise and spectators eat and enjoy themselves. It is attended by the whole family, takes place on the village heath or, in modern Burma, also in town halls. The performing troupes tour Burma in the dry season.

8.

*Uposatha*: see Note in first talk.

9.

Venerable Mahakassapa: one of the eighty great disciples of the Buddha, the senior-most at the time of the Buddha's demise. He presided over the First Council held three months after the Buddha passed away.

10.

In rural Burma people sleep on mats on the floor. Spreading a mat means getting ready to lie down.

11.

Sitter's practice: one of the ascetic practices (*dhutanga*). The monk observing the sitter's practice does not lie down. Disciples of the Webu Sayadaw still keep up this practice.

12.

The five "aggregates" or factors of existence: matter, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness.

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**Lastly we end with a synopsis by U Ba Khin**

**The Real Values of  
True Buddhist Meditation**  
(Sayagyi U Ba Khin, 1961)

**1. The Foundation of a Buddhist**

A Buddhist is a person who takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

We have four categories of Buddhists, namely:

1. *Bhaya*: A Buddhist because of danger
2. *Labha*: A Buddhist because of the need for gratification
3. *Kula*: A Buddhist because of birth
4. *Saddha*: A Buddhist because of faith.

Buddhists may be further divided into two classes, namely:

5. Those who intend to make a bid for release in this very life;
6. Those who are just accumulating virtues (*Paramis*) with a view of becoming:
  - a. a Buddha
  - b. a *Pacceka* Buddha (i.e., a non-teaching Buddha)
  - c. one of the *Agga-savakas* (chief disciples)
  - d. one of the 80 *Maha-savakas* (leading disciples)
  - e. an *Arahat*

For the consummation of the vow to become a Buddha, a *Pacceka* Buddha, etc., the length of time that is required for the accumulation of the virtues is roughly:

7. For teaching Buddhas:
  - a. a *Viriyadhika* Buddha (with effort as the predominating factor): 16 incalculable World-cycles (*Asankheyya*, a unit followed by 140 ciphers) plus 100,000 World-cycles (*Kappa*)

- b.a *Saddhadhika* Buddha (with faith as the predominating factor): 8 incalculable World-cycles plus 100,000 World-cycles
- c.a *Pannadhika* Buddha (with wisdom as the predominating factor): 4 incalculable World-cycles plus 100,00 World-cycles
- 8. For a *Pacceka* Buddha: 2 incalculable World-cycles plus 100,000 World-cycles
- 9. For an *Agga-savaka*: 1 incalculable World-cycle plus 100,000 World-cycles
- 10. For a *Maha-savaka*: 100,000 World-cycles
- 11. For an *Arahat*: 100 to 1,000 World-cycles approximately.

Once a person becomes a Buddhist, he acquires the seed of the *Buddha-Dhamma* which he is to develop according to his capacity. Every Buddhist is expected to walk on the Noble Eightfold Path in order to attain the goal of *Nibbana* in his capacity as a Buddha, a *Pacekka* Buddha, or an *Agga-savaka*, etc., as he may

choose. He must work for the consummation of his goal himself.

Among those who intend to make a bid for release in the same lifetime, there are four types of individuals:

12. *Ugghatitannu* (of quick understanding)
13. *Vipancitannu* (understanding in detail)
14. *Neyya* (needing to be led)
15. *Padaparama* (one whose highest attainment is the text)

An *Ugghatitannu* is an individual who encounters a Buddha in person and who is capable of attaining the Noble Path and Noble Truth (*Dhamma*) through the mere hearing of a short discourse.

A *Vipancitannu* is an individual who can attain the Paths and the Fruition states only when a discourse is expounded to him at some considerable length.

A *Neyya* is an individual who does not have the capability of attaining the Paths and the Fruition states through the hearing of either a short or a long discourse but who must make a study of the teachings and practise the provisions contained therein for days, months or years in order that he may attain the Paths and the Fruition states.

In the answer to a question raised by *Bodhirajakumara*, the Buddha said, [1] "I cannot say what exactly should be the time for the complete realization of the Truth. Even assuming that you renounce the world and join the Order of my *Sangha*, it might take you seven years or six years or five years or two years or one year as the case may be. Nay, it can be six months or three months or two months or one month. On the other hand, I do not discount the possibility of attaining *Arahatship* in a fortnight or seven days or in one day or even in a fraction of a day. It depends on so many factors."

A *Padaparama* is an individual who, though he encounters a Buddha *Sasana*, [2] and puts forth the utmost possible effort in both the study and practice of the *Dhamma*, cannot attain the Paths and the Fruition states within this lifetime. All that he can do is accumulate habits and potential. Such a person cannot obtain release from *Samsara* (continued rebirth) within his lifetime. If he dies while practising *Samatha* (calm) for *Samadhi* (concentration) or *Vipassana* (insight) for *Panna* (wisdom) and secures rebirth either as a human being or a *Deva* in his next existence, he can attain the Paths and Fruition states in that existence within the present Buddha *Sasana* which is to last for five thousand years from the date of the passing away of the Buddha into *Maha-pari-nibbana*.

It is therefore to be assumed that only those quite matured in the accumulation of virtues (*Parami*), such as those of the four types of individuals referred to above, will be inclined to make that bid for release and take seriously to

courses of Buddhist Meditation. As a corollary, we have no doubt that whoever is determined to follow strictly and diligently the Noble Eightfold Path through a course in Buddhist Meditation under the guidance of a **qualified** Teacher, is an individual either of the *Neyya* or *Padaparama* type.

## FOOTNOTES:

16. See the *Middle Length Sayings*, II, pp. 279-284
17. The period during which the Teachings of a Buddha are available

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Final Note:

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