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Center for 8 years and when Panditarama Sayadaw U Pandita moved to his new center, he also followed Sayadawgyi. Since 2006, he has been residing in Tharmanaykyaw Mahagandhayon Monastery, Mawbi. He gives instructions to vipassana yogis, teaches Pali to monks, novices, nuns and children; and works for the good of Sasana. He has written more than hundred books so far. He has visited Malaysia, Singapore, Canada and United States to teach meditation retreats.



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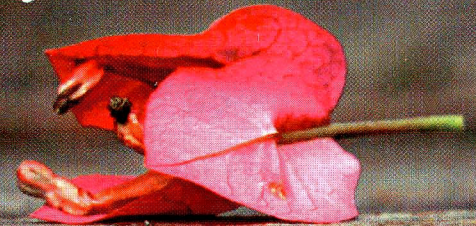
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The Requisites of Freedom

Essential Questions on the Liberating Nature of the Buddha's Teachings on Dāna, Sīla and Bhāvanā

Tharmanaykyaw Sayadaw

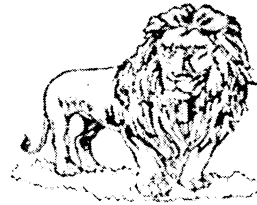


The Requisites of Freedom

*Essential Questions on the Liberating Nature of the
Buddha's Teachings on Dāna, Sīla and Bhāvanā*

Tharmanaykyaw Sayadaw

(Ashin Dhammikālaṅkārabhivaṃsa)



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Preface

Tharmanaykyaw Sayadaw (Ashin Dhammikālāṅkāṛābhivaṃsa) was feeling severe pain in his eyes. While Sayadaw was in Thailand in February for medical checkup, cataract of initial stage was seen in his left eye. An eye specialist in Yangon said now both eyes had cataracts, and a surgery was recommended. Through the help of a pious devotee named Supaporn Thungnirundorn, it was decided to go to Bangkok for surgery. Accompanying Sayadaw were myself and a nun named Javananyani. A meditation retreat was coming, so Sayadaw had to be back for the retreat. Therefore, for check-up and surgery, Supaporn had arranged an early appointment with an eye specialist in Ratanin Eye Hospital in Bangkok.

As soon as we went out of the green channel in Suvarnabhumi Airport, we were welcomed and received by Supaporn. We were then transported to a nice Sorn Tawee meditation center, Chacherngsao Province, an hour drive from the airport. The next day in the morning, she drove Sayadaw to the

Eye Hospital. It took almost a whole day at the hospital. The day for surgery had been booked for the next day even before Sayadaw went to Bangkok. After the checkup and analysis, the surgeon said that the cataracts were in an early stage and surgery was not necessary. A new diagnosis was made: macular degeneration, and recommended regular eye checkup.

The return day was already fixed. So, we had few more days to stay in Bangkok. That day we stayed in a 'university hotel' nearby. The next day, with the help of Supaporn and her *Dhamma* friends, Sayadaw went for a general medical checkup in a Hospital. There he was checked for osteoporosis and lung infection, both came back negative.

That same day we returned to the meditation center and planned to visit some places around Bangkok. The first day we went to Audhaya, an ancient city ruined by the evils of war. During the second day's trip another *yogi* named Mariryn joined the pilgrimage and took us to the Grand Palace, the Emerald Buddha and the Big Laying Buddha.

We returned to Yangon on the sixth day, an afternoon flight. At the Suvarnabhumi airport guest room, Dr. Teera and his family, a devout Buddhist family from Bangkok, welcomed us and became donors of the lunch. They were also one of the sponsors for Sayadaw's eye checkup.

Because of Supaporn and other Thai *yogi*'s generous help and assistance,

we were able to do the medical check-up and also visit some places without facing any difficulty. As they were all enthusiastic Buddhist practitioners, many insightful *Dhamma* question and answer sessions occurred during those six days.

This work is a collection of *Dhamma* questions and answers during the Sayadaw's visit to Bangkok. These questions were asked by Buddhist devotees and meditators in Thailand, and answers were given by Tharmanaykyaw Sayadaw. I myself was the translator. Most of the questions were raised on the road, while going to the hospital or while going to visit places. Some questions and answers are records from airport guest room.

After coming back to Yangon, I transcribed all the questions and answers I could remember, and decided to publish a booklet with the intention to share the *Dhamma*. The questions are not in the order as they were asked. I have attempted to lay them out by categorizing them into *dāna*, *sīla*, and *bhāvanā*. Most of the answers come from Tipitaka sources and books written by Mahāsi Sayadaw. I have tried to give references as far as I am able to trace them. I have not provided page numbers from Mahāsi Sayadaw's books as different print editions have different page numbering.

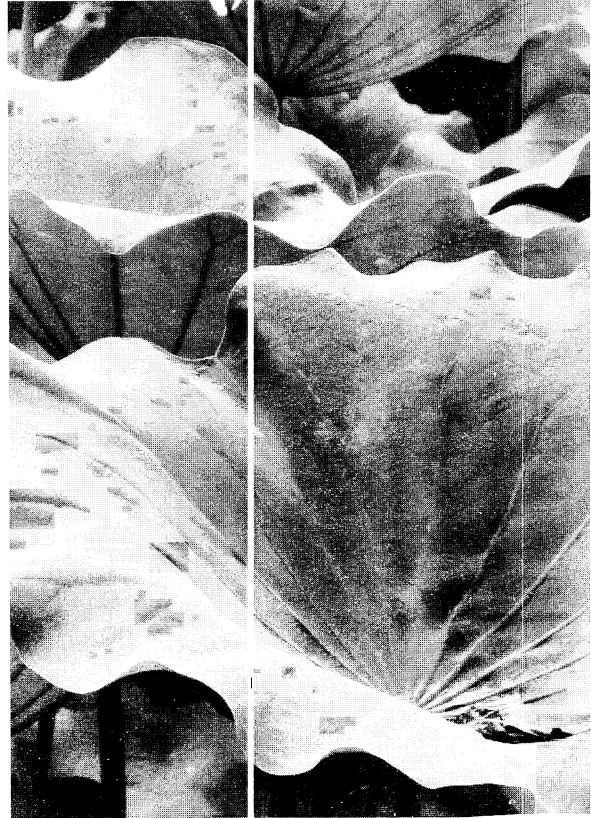
I have tried to be as accurate as possible in translating; and as I am transcribing them with memory, it is my responsibility if there remain any


errors or mistranslations; they are due to my own ignorance and shortcomings.

Sadhu!! Sadhu!! to all the Thai devotees particularly Supaporn for their enormous faith in the Triple Gems, and for their support. My humble respects and enormous gratitude to Tharmanaykyaw Sayadaw who allowed to transcribe and publish this *Dhamma* gift.

May all beings be well and happy and live peacefully.

USobhana
TMM, Myanmar
October 01, 2013.





As a sweet-smelling and
beautiful lotus flower may grow
upon a heap of rubbish thrown
on the highway, so also, out
of the rubbish heap of beings
may appear a disciple of the
Buddha, who with his wisdom
shines forth far above the blind
(ignorant) worldlings.

Dhammapada Verses 53 - 59



In order to attain *Nibbāna*, it is necessary to practice *vipassanā*. One cannot attain *Nibbāna* through *dāna* alone. However, the merit (*kusala*) gained by doing *dāna* creates suitable and supportive conditions for the practice of *vipassanā* and attainment of *Nibbāna*.

Dāna

“Mā, bhikkhave, puññānaṃ bhāyittha. Sukhassetam, bhikkhave, adhivacanaṃ iṭṭhassa kantassa piyassa manāpassa yadidaṃ puññāni.”

“Monks, do not be afraid to do meritorious deeds; it is another name of happiness, what is desired for, what is longed for, what is loved, and what is pleasant.”

1. When you offer food, how many things do you offer? And how many things do you receive?

While offering food, the donor offers five things to the receiver:

1. Life (*āyu*),
2. Good appearance (*vaṇṇa*),
3. Happiness (*sukha*),
4. Strength (*bala*),
5. Wisdom (*paññā*).

Having offered these five things, the donor receives those very five things:

1. Having offered life, the donor receives life,
2. Having offered good appearance, the donor receives good appearance,
3. Having offered happiness, the donor receives happiness,
4. Having offered strength, the donor receives strength,
5. Having offered wisdom, the donor receives wisdom. (Bhojana Sutta, Aṅguttara Nikāya II, 35)

Our life is sustained by the food that we eat; therefore, when we offer food, we offer life.

The appearance of a person who is suffering malnutrition or has not eaten well is not good compared to a person who is well fed. Therefore, when we offer food, we offer good appearance.

The mind of a hungry person is hardly happy; therefore, we offer happiness when we offer food.

Physical body of a person who has not eaten well is not strong. Therefore, when we offer food, we offer physical strength.

Finally, undistracted by the pangs of hunger, a person can pursue knowledge; therefore, we also offer wisdom.

Thus, having given these five things one receives those five things through the efficacy of the law of *kamma* which can be summed up thus:

“One reaps what one sows.
One who does good reaps good,
And one who does evil reaps evil.” (Saṃyutta Nikāya I, 229)

2. What are the benefits of *dāna* visible here and now?

In the Sīhasenāpati Sutta the Buddha mentioned four benefits of *dāna* that are visible here and now to us (Sīhasenāpati Sutta, Aṅguttara Nikāya II, 33). Once, the Chief Marshal named Sīha asked the Buddha whether it was possible to point out the benefits of *dāna* that can be experienced here and now.

The Buddha told him that it was possible and showed four benefits:

1. Becomes dear and likable to many people,
2. Gets the association of noble and good people,
3. Good reputation spreads,
4. Becomes confident and unabashed in the assembly.

The Buddha added that arising in a good and happy realm after death was the benefit that can be visible in afterlife.

When this was said, Sīha said that there was no need for him to go by faith in the Buddha in order to believe about the four benefits visible here and now, for he knew these by himself. He said he was a liberal donor and he knew those results through his own experience.

However, as for the last benefit he would go by faith in the Buddha because he did not know this by himself.

3. What is the worst of the diseases and what is its remedy?

Hunger is the worst of the diseases (Dhammapada verse 203). This is a disease that can never be cured completely. We have to always treat this disease though it is incurable – we take medicine for temporary relief but then the disease arises again.

Food is like a medicine and the donor is like a physician giving medicine. So, those who offer food are like physicians.

Once there was a poor man who spent the whole day looking after cattle. He was hungry; so thought he will return home after paying homage to the Buddha. The Buddha asked that the poor man be fed, and gave a *Dhamma* talk after the poor man had eaten.

In the story of Tambadāthika also, Venerable Sāriputta asked him to eat lunch so that he could pay attention well while he gave a *Dhamma* talk.

4. How much *dāna* should one give?

There are so many benefits of *dāna*. The Buddha said:

“People do not know the results of *dāna* like I do, therefore they eat without giving. If they know the results of *dāna*, they will share even the last morsel of food” (Itivuttaka, 207).

5. Why some people find it easy to give *dāna* and others not very easy?

The first reason is the perfection of *dāna pārami*. One who has fulfilled this *pārami* in the past, finds it easy to give *dāna*. For example, in the life of Vessantara, the *Bodhisatta* was very open handed even when he was a child.

Thus, just like when we see smoke, we can know that there is fire, when we see that some people give very easily, we can know that that person has fulfilled *dāna pārami* well in the past lives.

Another simile: when we see the rivers flooding we can know that there is rainfall in the high lands.

Some people can give easily because they have seen the benefits of giving *dāna*. They have understood that when we give, we receive more than what we give.

Some give easily because they are motivated by the feeling of joy and happiness they experience when they give *dāna*.

Some give *dāna* simply because they understand that it is a good thing. (Aṅguttara III, 68).

6. What we give and what we receive which one is more?

Giving *dāna* is like planting a seed. By planting a small seed of Bodhi tree, you can get a very huge tree. The result of giving *dāna* arises in a similar manner.

If you give *dāna* to an animal, you can expect the result multiplied by 100;

If you give *dāna* to an unvirtuous worldling (*puthujjana*), you can expect the result multiplied by 1000;

If you give *dāna* to a virtuous *puthujjana*, you can expect the result multiplied by 100,000;

If you give *dāna* to a person outside *Buddha Sāsana* who has overcome hindrances, you can expect the result multiplied by 100,000 x 10 million;

If you give *dāna* to those who are practicing to become Noble person (*ariya*), you can expect uncountable result;

If you give *dāna* to those who are Noble person, you can expect result much more than that. (Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta, M.III, 298)

7. How does *dāna* help to attain *Nibbāna*?

All wholesome actions help to attain *Nibbāna* through strong supportive condition (*upanissaya paccaya*), and the nearest wholesome action

is *vipassanā*. *Dāna* helps to attain enlightenment and also to attain Buddhahood (Aṅguttara Aṭṭhakathā III, 204).

Dāna is also one of the perfections (*pārami*) that should be fulfilled to become a Buddha.

In order to attain *Nibbāna*, it is necessary to practice *vipassanā*. One cannot attain *Nibbāna* through *dāna* alone. However, the merit (*kusala*) gained by doing *dāna* creates suitable and supportive conditions for the practice of *vipassanā* and attainment of *Nibbāna*.

There is a story of Sakka, king of deities, who became a Noble person (*ariya*) through the strong supportive condition of *dāna* and other wholesome actions. He had done a lot of good deeds while he was in the human world. Because of those good actions, he became the King of deities and was able to attain the first Noble Path after coming into contact with the Buddha.

8. If we give *dāna* without wishing to attain *Nibbāna* do we still attain it?

Even when you do not pray for *Nibbāna* while doing wholesome deeds, if you do the wholesome deed wholeheartedly believing in *kamma* and result, as a result you will become endowed with qualities necessary to become

enlightened. When doing good deeds the Sakka did not wish to attain *Nibbāna*. However, because of his merits, he was endowed with conditions necessary to attain *Nibbāna*. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, *Sakkapañha Sutta*)

9. By giving *dāna*, how can one cultivate the Eightfold Noble Path?

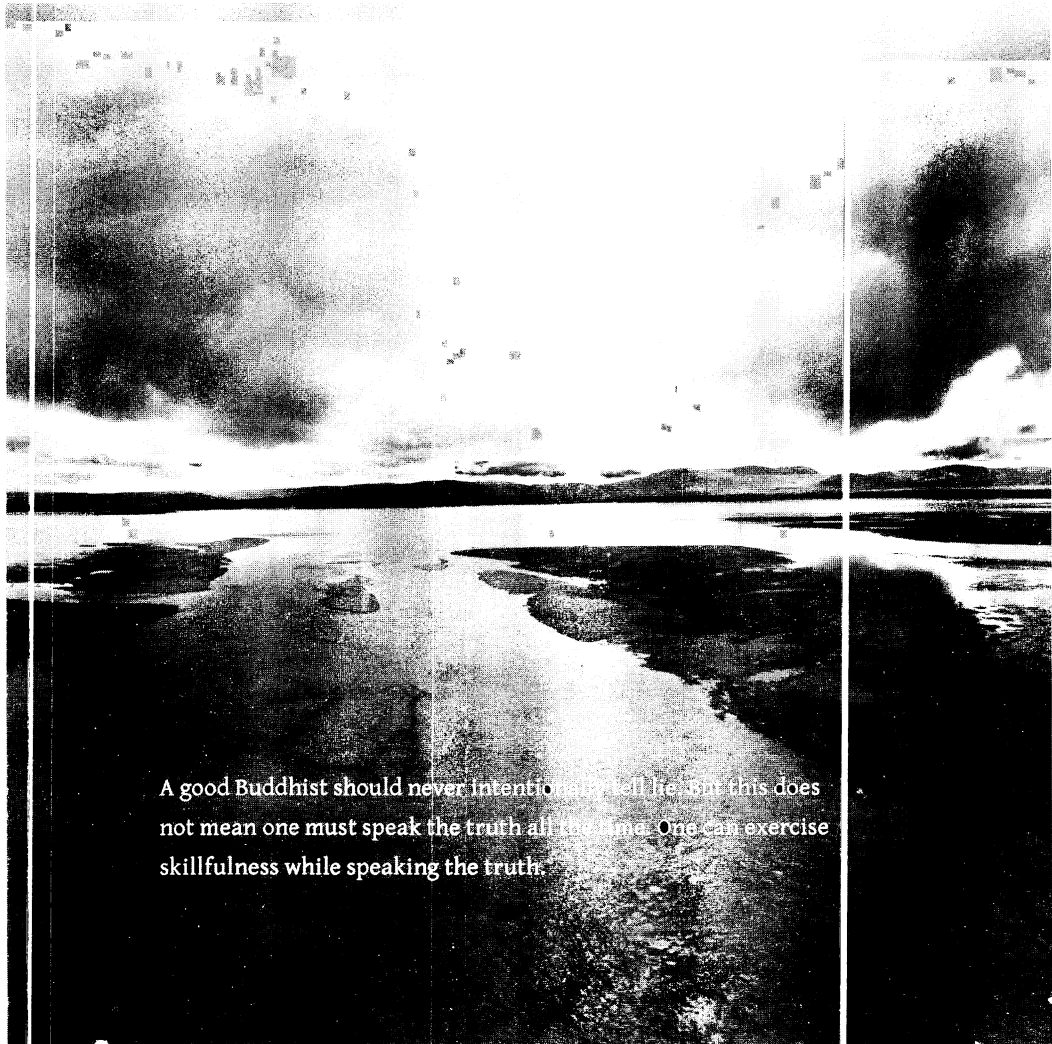
When one gives *dāna*, one is cultivating the Eightfold Noble Path thus:

1. The belief in *dāna kamma* and its result is right view (*sammā diṭṭhi*);
2. The wholesome thoughts present when we plan to give *dāna*, prepare for it, and give it are right thoughts (*sammā saṅkappa*). Even wholesome thoughts that review one's *dāna* is right thought.
3. The effort exerted in giving *dāna* is right effort (*sammā vāyāma*).
4. The mindfulness present therein is right mindfulness (*sammā sati*).
5. The stability of mind present therein is right concentration (*sammā samādhi*).
6. When one is engaged in giving *dāna*, one does not break the three morality factors that were undertaken, and has right speech (*sammā vācā*), right action (*sammā kammanta*), and right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*).

These factors of Eightfold Noble Path can become only strong supportive condition for the practice of *vīpassanā* and attainment of *Nibbāna*.

It is only the Eightfold Noble Path related to *vipassanā* practice that can lead to the attainment of *Nibbāna*.

(Ledi Sayadaw, *Sāsanavisodhani* I, 26)



A good Buddhist should never intentionally tell lies. But this does not mean one must speak the truth all the time. One can exercise skillfulness while speaking the truth.

Sīla

“Yato kho te, bhikkhu, sīlañca suvisuddhaṃ bhavissati diṭṭhi ca ujukā, tato tvaṃ, bhikkhu, sīlaṃ nissāya sīle paṭiṭṭhāya cattāro satipaṭṭhāne tividhena bhāveyyāsi. (Saṃyutta III, 124)

“When, bhikkhu, your virtue is well purified and your view straight, then based upon virtue, established upon virtue, you should cultivate mindfulness in a threefold way.”

10. What is right speech (sammā vācā)?

There are four types of wrong speech:

1. Telling lies,
2. Backbiting in order to create division between people who have sympathy to one another,
3. Harsh speech, and
4. Useless and vain talk. (Dīgha Nikāya II, 249)

Right speech refers to abstention from these four types of wrong speech. Here, right speech does not mean speech that should

be spoken. For example, by mere abstention from telling lies there is right speech. Moreover, the speech that is opposite to above four forms of wrong speech is also right speech: telling truth, speech that fosters unity, kind and gentle speech, wise and useful talk. (Vinaya Parivāra, 227)

11. What is right action (*sammā kammanta*)?

There are three types of bodily misconduct:

1. Killing,
2. Stealing, and
3. Sexual Misconduct. (Dīgha II, 250)

Right action refers to abstention from these three types bodily misconduct.

12. What is right livelihood?

If one earns one's livelihood by means of wrong speech and wrong action, it is wrong livelihood. If one earns one's living without breaking precepts, it is right livelihood. (Dīgha II, 250)

13. What is the proper way to offer things to monks?

A monk can receive offerings in two ways: in hand or in something touched with the hand such as a piece of cloth. A donor can offer in three ways: give the offerings in hand, place it on something touched by monk such as a bowl, or 'drop it' as in the case of offering during almsround. (Parivāra, 325)

14. Can a Noble person drink liquor?

An *ariya* can never drink liquor even at the cost of life. It is very evident that even a person who has practiced *vipassanā* well will not drink liquor, let alone the *ariya*.

There was a *yogi* named Maung Ma in Myanmar. Before he practiced *vipassanā*, he was a drunkard. He practiced *vipassanā* well and went back home. It is said that he used to practice *vipassanā* even when he was working at his farm. One day as he was observing his mind whether he wanted to drink alcohol or not, his *vipassanā* knowledge matured and he attained the cessation. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Takkato Vipassanā)

15. Can an *ariya* take medicine that is mixed with liquor?

If a physician prescribes such medicine for specific ailment, if there is any ailment it can cure, it is possible that an *ariya* may use it for purely

medical reason. Even in that case, we think that an *ariya* will not take if the smell and taste of alcohol is so evident. According to monastic discipline, a monastic is allowed to drink medicine or partake food containing alcohol as long as the smell and taste of alcohol is not evident.

16. What type of lie telling leads to rebirth in lower planes?

Musāvāda refers to telling lie by making true something that is not true.

There are four factors that should be present in the act of telling lie:

1. False statement.
2. Wanting to deceive.
3. Telling lie.
4. The listener believes the false statement to be true.

If all these four factors are present, then it becomes *musāvāda kamma*. If this *kamma* happens to destroy other's welfare, then it can even send one to hell. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Sallekha Sutta Tayadaw)

17. How to know the seriousness of telling lie?

If you tell a lie to a person who has good qualities such as morality then it is serious. The more the good qualities, the more it is serious. If that person does not have good qualities such as morality, then the *kamma* is

not serious. Moreover, if the speech destroys little welfare, it is less serious. But if it destroys much welfare, it is more serious. The *musāvāda* that does not destroy other's welfare is not that serious. Such a *musāvāda* cannot give rebirth in woeful planes. However, as a good person, one should abstain from all kinds of lie telling. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Sallekha Sutta Tayadaw)

18. What type of speech should we speak and what should we restrain?

There are three things that need to be considered while speaking: true or false, brings about welfare or not, and whether the listener likes or not. By this there will be six types of speech:

1. Not true, does not bring about welfare, the listener does not like.
2. Not true, does not bring about welfare, the listener likes.
3. True, does not bring about welfare, the listener does not like.
4. True, does not bring about welfare, the listener likes.
5. True, brings about welfare, the listener does not like.
6. True, brings about welfare, the listener likes.

Among these six types of speech, the last two should be spoken. The Buddha said that he speaks only these two types of speech. Finally, even these two types of speech, one should speak at the right time. (Majjhima Nikāya II, 57)

The Buddha said that when we speak we should speak only after proper reflection: we should consider whether our speech destroys our welfare or that of others, whether it is wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*), and whether it brings happiness or pain. If it does not destroy our welfare or others' welfare, if it is not unwholesome, if it does not bring pain, then we should speak. If it destroys our welfare or others' welfare, if it is unwholesome, and if it brings pain, then we should not speak.

We should consider this before speaking, while speaking, and after speaking. If we find that it destroys welfare, it is *akusala*, and results in pain, we should not speak such speech; if we become aware that we are speaking such kind of speech, we should stop it. If we know that we spoke such kind of speech, we should try not to repeat it again. (Majjhima I, 80)

Thus, we should speak the truth, speak what is wholesome, speak for welfare, speak at the right time, and speak mindfully.

19. Should we always speak the truth?

A good Buddhist should never intentionally tell lie. But this does not mean one must speak the truth all the time. One can exercise skillfulness while speaking the truth. During the Buddha's time, there was a thief-executioner named Tambadāthika who had killed thieves for 55 years.

After his retirement, one day as he was listening to Venerable Sāriputta's *Dhamma* talk, he felt remorse about what he had done and was not able to pay attention. When Venerable Sāriputta knew this, he asked whether he executed thieves through his own wish or because of King's order. When Tambadāthika answered that he was ordered by the King, Venerable Sāriputta asked him whether in that case there would be *akusala*. When this question was asked, Tambadāthika found some relief and was able to listen to the *dhamma* talk and practice *vipassanā*. The truth is that Tambadāthika accumulated a lot of *akusala* even when he was following King's order. But instead of stigmatizing him, Venerable Sāriputta used skillfulness of speech bearing in mind the welfare of Tambadāthika. (Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā I, 407)

20. How should we cultivate mindfulness when we are speaking?

A *yogi* should be mindful when the desire to speak arises and make note of the desire to speak. At the time of speaking also, we should be mindful. It may be difficult to note completely. Therefore, if it is not important, it is better not to speak. When the knowledge matures, the mind that wants to speak, the material phenomena produced by that mind and so on also become clear. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, *Vipassanā Shu Nyi I*)

21. How to practice Noble Silence?

According to Pāḷi, noble silence (*ariya tuṇhibhāva*) actually does not refer to 'noble speech', but it means practice of *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation (Aṅguttara Aṭṭhakathā III, 195; Majjhima Aṭṭhakathā II, 75; Parivāra Aṭṭhakathā, 205). One may strictly abstain from speaking, but if the mind is not meditating and is full of unwholesome thoughts, it cannot be called noble silence.

Some monks observed complete silence during a rains retreat. After the retreat, they visited Buddha and related how they spent their retreat peacefully. The Buddha said that living in such a way was the way of animals, the way of dumb person, and way of enemies living together. He even laid down a disciplinary rule that forbids monks from observing complete silence. (Vinaya Mahāvagga, 219ff)

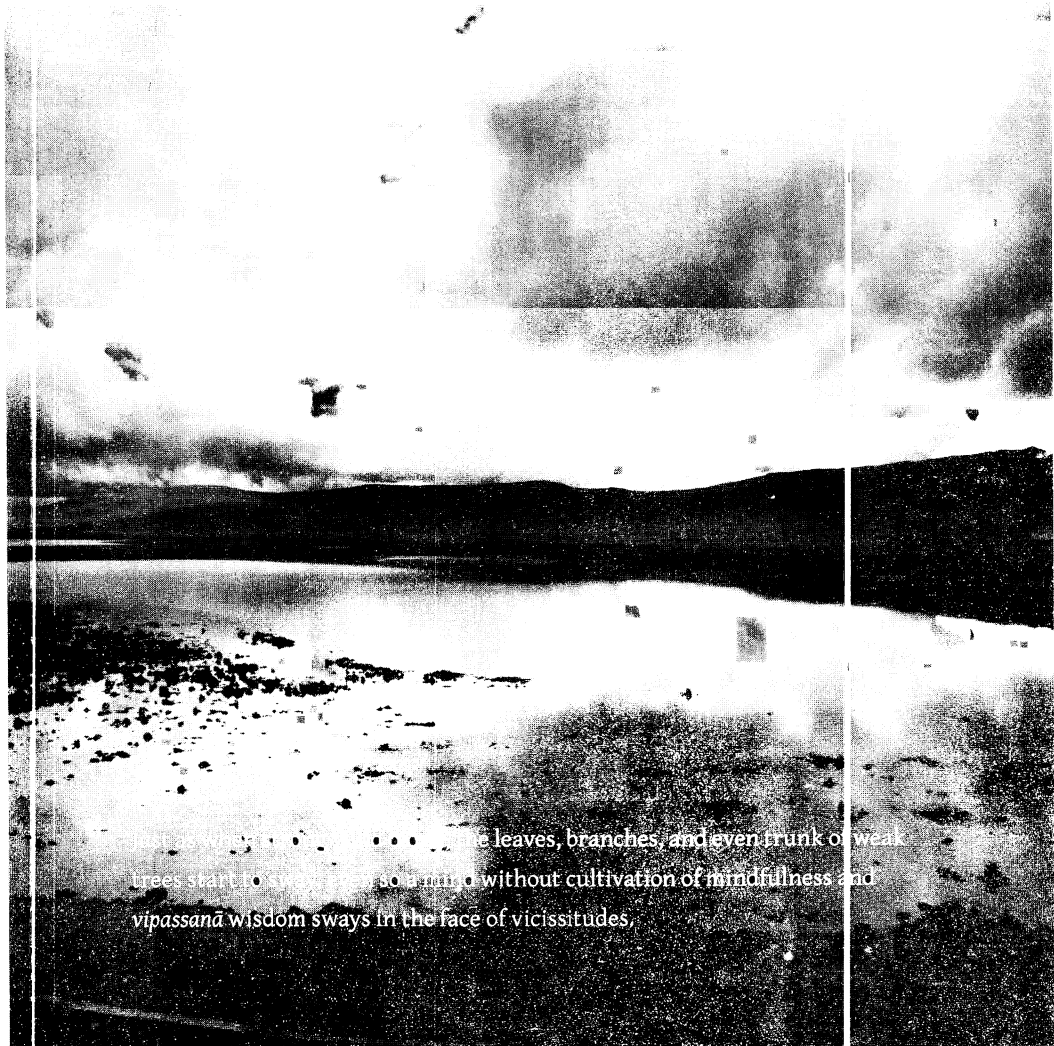
Making strong determination not to speak at all is not good. It is enough if one makes a resolution not to speak about useless and unimportant things. One can speak what is important and beneficial; one can speak what is related to *Dhamma*.

While living together, one should speak when it is essential to speak. However, when we speak we should try to speak as little as possible and there should be a limit as to what one says. When *Dhamma* friends meet, they should ask questions on *Dhamma*, discuss about *Dhamma*, explain

Dhamma; if not they should dwell quietly engaged in *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Sallekha Sutta Tayadaw II)

22. Why people in this world find themselves in different situations and different conditions?

This is due to differences in the type of bodily, verbal, and mental actions beings have performed in the past. For example becoming wealthy is the result of generosity (*dāna*), having good appearance is due to non-anger or lovingkindness, having long and healthy life is due to non-harm and benevolence, having friends and companions is due to not being jealous, and having noble lineage is due to humility and lack of conceit. (Majjhima III, 243)



Just as when the leaves, branches, and even trunk of weak trees start to sway, even so a mind, without cultivation of mindfulness and vipassanā wisdom sways in the face of vicissitudes.

Bhāvanā

Ye, bhikkhave, anukampeyyātha, ye ca kho sotabbaṃ maññeyyuṃ mittā vā amaccā vā ñātī vā sālohitā vā, te vo, bhikkhave, catunnaṃ satipaṭṭhānānaṃ bhāvanāya samādapetabbā nivesetabbā paṭiṭṭhāpetabbā.” (S.III, 165)

“Bhikkhus, those for whom you have compassion and who think you should be listened to – whether friends or colleagues, relatives or kinsmen – these you should exhort, settle, and establish in the development of the four establishments of mindfulness.”

23. What are the three types of Eightfold Path factors?

The three types of ‘Eightfold Path factors’ are:

- Mūla (Root) Factors:
 1. One should be endowed with the right view of *kamma* and result (*kammasakatā sammā diṭṭhi*).
 2. Should have pure morality by being endowed with right speech (*sammā vācā*), right action (*sammā kammanta*), and right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*).

3. Should be endowed with a meditation subject that removes hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*)

- *Pubbabhāga* (forerunner) Factors: Starting from the ‘knowledge of delimitation of mind and matter’ (*nāmarūpapariccheda ñāṇa*) up to ‘knowledge of conformity’ (*anuloma ñāṇa*)
- *Ariya* (Noble) Factors: Noble Path.
(Mahāsi Sayadaw, Dhammasacca Taya Daw)

24. What is the difference between ignorance and wrong view?

Ignorance (*avijjā*) means not knowing the truth. There are two types of ignorance (*avijjā*): not knowing and knowing wrongly. For example, not knowing *dukkha* as *dukkha*, and knowing wrongly such as knowing *dukkha* as *sukha*; not knowing *kamma* and its result, and so on.

Wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*) refers to wrong ideas such as ‘there is no result of good and bad *kamma*.’ It also refers to three types of wrong ideas: the view of self or personality (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*), the view of eternity (*sassata diṭṭhi*), and the view of annihilation (*uccheda diṭṭhi*). They are based upon the wrong idea of permanent ‘self’ (*atta*). (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Paṭiccasamuppāda Taya Daw)

25. Is all ‘not knowing’ ignorance (*moha*)?

As the nature of ‘not knowing’ is called *moha*, the question might arise whether it is possible to call not having the knowledge about things one has not learned, not knowing about the place one has not visited, not knowing the name one has not memorized, and so on as *moha*. But it should be noted that such a type of not knowing is not *moha*. It simply refers to not having perception that makes notes. This type of ‘not knowing’ can be present also in an *Arahant*, needless to say about ordinary person. (Milindapañha, 259)

26. What is the meaning of *Dhammavicaya*?

Dhammavicaya means ‘investigation of *dhamma*’ and refers to one of the seven factors of enlightenment. Ultimately, it refers to wisdom or right view of the Eightfold Noble Path. In *vipassanā* meditation, it arises as knowledge of the characteristics of mental and material phenomena. The knowledge that understands the true nature of mind and matter is also *dhammavicaya*; the knowledge that understands the impermanence, suffering, and not-self nature of mind and matter is also *dhammavicaya*. It is not ‘investigation’ by thinking or contemplating. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Silavanta Taya Daw)

27. What is *mettā* meditation? What is its benefit? How to practice it?

Cultivating the mind that wants ‘oneself’ and ‘others’ to be happy is called *mettā* meditation. The direct benefit of cultivating *mettā* is removal of hatred and strengthening of patience. One can cultivate *mettā* by wishing the happiness of oneself, people we see, we hear about, we remember in the mind, or any other living beings.

We can cultivate *mettā* by wishing happiness by using phrases such as: “May you be well and happy,” or “May all beings be well and happy.” If you wish in the mind, it is mental *mettā*; if you recite them, verbal *mettā* is also included. The four most often used phrases are thus:

1. May you be free from danger (*avero hotu*)
2. May you be free from anger and hatred (*abyāpajjo hotu*)
3. May you be free from disease (*anigho hotu*)
4. May you be able to look after yourself happily (*sukhi attānaṃ pariharatu*)

In order to strengthen the *mettā* meditation, it is essential that one should act with *mettā* in one’s verbal and bodily actions. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Brahmagavihāra Taya Daw)

28. To whom should we send *mettā* to start with and how should we choose the person?

The first person one should send *mettā* is oneself. We should do this to understand clearly that other beings also wish to be happy just like oneself. “Just like I want to be happy, I do not want to suffer, I want to be alive, I do not want to die, other beings also want to be happy, do not want to suffer, want to be alive, do not want to die.”

After that, we should send *mettā* to those we respect and admire such as teachers, grandparents, parents, uncle, aunt, and so on.

After that we should send *mettā* to those who are very dear to us such as son and daughter, brother and sister, disciple and so on.

After that we should send *mettā* to those for whom we have neutral feelings such as people we do not know, and people who are neither dear to us nor we hate.

In the fourth stage one should send *mettā* to those for whom we have feelings of anger or enmity. If one does not have such a person, this step is not necessary. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Brahmagavihāra Taya Daw)

29. To whom should we not send *mettā* at the beginning?

We should not send *mettā* at the beginning to four persons:

1. People we hate
2. People who are very dear to us
3. Neutral people
4. Enemy

First of all it is difficult to send *mettā* at the beginning to these four types of people. It is difficult to send *mettā* to people we hate by cultivating the attitude of a friend towards them.

It is also difficult to send *mettā* to people who are very dear to us, by cultivating the attitude of neutral persons.

It is also difficult to send *mettā* to those who are neutral to us.

As for our enemies, when we remember them, their faults will appear and we become angry. (Visuddhimagga I, 289)

30. Do we need to visualize in our mind the person we are sending *mettā*?

Important thing is to cultivate the mind that wishes happiness. The image may appear sometimes and sometimes not. Sometimes we send *mettā* even to beings who are not visible and whom we have never seen or heard of. In such cases it is difficult for the mental image to appear.

31. How should we send *mettā* to a group?

We can use different categories of beings: cardinal direction, plane of existence, locality, gender, spiritual status, and so on. (Visuddhimagga I, 302)

32. How long should one practice *mettā* meditation?

If you want to cultivate *samatha* through *mettā* meditation, you need to take it as the main meditation subject and practice it as much as you can in all the four postures. Some *yogis* do this and cultivate *mettā* spending their meditating hours cultivating *mettā*. It is possible to attain up to third fine-material *jhāna* through the practice of *mettā*.

If you want to cultivate *mettā* as a wholesome action, you can spend few minutes or as long as you can spare time. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Brahmavihāra Taya Daw)

33. How to practice *asubha* meditation?

There are two ways to cultivate *asubha* meditation: by contemplating *asubha* in a dead body and contemplating *asubha* in a living body.

There are ten contemplations regarding the dead body: the bloating corpse, the rotten corpse, pus-oozing corpse, corpse cut into two pieces, corpse eaten by jackals and wild dogs, scattered corpse, blood stained corpse,

the corpse that is cut into pieces, the corpse infested by worms, and the bones. You can observe either the dead body or a picture, and cultivate the perception of *asubha*.

Contemplation of the impurities oozing out of nine pores in the body is also a type of *asubha* meditation. This point becomes very evident if one does not take shower and change clean clothes. Contemplation of 32 bodily parts as *asubha* falls into the second category.

It is possible to cultivate *samatha* by cultivating the perception of *asubha*. One can also attain *jhāna* by cultivating *asubha*. (Visuddhimagga I, 172ff)

34. What are the seven benefits of *Satipaṭṭhāna*?

The seven benefits are thus:

1. Purification of beings (*sattānaṃ visuddhiyā*): It means purification of the mind of beings. Through the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* one can remove defilements from the mind.
2. Overcoming sorrow and lamentation (*soka-paridevānaṃ samatikkamāya*): A person practicing *satipaṭṭhāna* can observe whatever mental formations appear in the mind. When faced with vicissitudes of life, ordinary people become overwhelmed with sorrow and lamentation. But a person practicing *Satipaṭṭhāna*

understands the impermanent nature of all conditioned formations.

3. Overcoming bodily pain and mental pain (*dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya*).
4. Attaining Path (*ñāyassa adhigamāya*): The Buddha said the cultivation of *Satipaṭṭhāna* is the only way to becoming a noble person.
5. Realization of *Nibbāna* (*nibbānassa sacchikiriya*): Through the cultivation of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, one can become a noble person and realize *Nibbāna*. (Dīgha III, 231)

Among these, the cultivation of *Satipaṭṭhāna* removes four states: sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, and mental pain that torment beings; and brings about three special results: purification, Path, and *Nibbāna*.

The Buddha pointed out these seven benefits of *Satipaṭṭhāna* before expounding the method of practice because by knowing the benefits people will be interested to listen and practice well. For example, if one knows the quality and benefits of a certain thing, one wants to obtain it. (Dīgha Aṭṭhakathā III, 231)

35. How mindfulness and *vipassanā* wisdom help to cope with vicissitudes of life?

If you have a very good digestive power, you can digest any food you eat. Similarly, when mindfulness and *vipassanā* wisdom are strong, one can cope with any type of vicissitudes calmly and without much suffering.

Just as when strong wind blows, the leaves, branches, and even trunk of weak trees start to sway, even so a mind without cultivation of mindfulness and *vipassanā* wisdom sways in the face of vicissitudes. However, just as when there are strong winds, the leaves and branches of a huge tree such as a *Bodhi* tree might sway but not the trunk, even so, the mind of a person who has cultivated mindfulness and *vipassanā* wisdom is strong.

36. How does Eightfold Noble Path arise in *vipassanā* practice?

When *vipassanā* right view (*sammā dīṭṭhi*) arises, its comparisons such as right thought (*sammā saṅkappa*) also arise. While seeing, hearing etc., observing and understanding impermanence and so on, it is right thought (*sammā saṅkappa*) that directs the mind towards the objects. Sometimes, therefore, it is translated as ‘right aim.’

The three factors of *samādhi* group are also present. The effort exerted while observing the object is right effort (*sammā vāyāma*). While observing the object, the mindfulness present therein is right mindfulness (*sammā sati*). The stability of the mind on the object that is observed is right concentration (*sammā samādhi*). These five factors are called ‘performers’ (*kāraka*).

When these factors are working together the remaining three factors of morality group are also present. The *sīla* that you have undertaken is unbroken and you do not break any precept. Thus, the three factors of morality, namely, right speech (*sammā vācā*), right action (*sammā kammanta*), and right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*) are also present by way of fulfilling the function. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Dhammasacca Taya Daw)

37. What is right thought and what is wrong thought?

There are two types of thought (*saṅkappa*): right thought (*sammā saṅkappa*) and wrong thought (*micchā saṅkappa*). Basically, all wholesome (*kusala*) thoughts are right thoughts: the thoughts about giving *dāna*, keeping precepts, and so on. It can be divided into three kinds:

1. Thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma vitakka*),
2. Thoughts of non-hatred (*abyāpāda vitakka*), and
3. Thoughts of harmlessness (*avihiṃsā vitakka*).

All types of unwholesome (*akusala*) thoughts are wrong thoughts. It can be divided into three kinds: 1) Thoughts of sensuality (*kāma vitakka*), 2) Thoughts of hatred (*byāpāda vitakka*), and 3) thoughts of harm (*vihiṃsā vitakka*).

38. Is the wandering mind in *vipassanā* always wrong thought?

Not all the thoughts are wrong thoughts. If the thought is unwholesome, such as associated with greed and hatred, then it is wrong thought. If the thought is associated with good states, such as thinking about doing good deeds, performing charity, and helping others, then it is good thought. Such a thought is not wrong, but during meditation too much of it might become impediment. During meditation it is important to cultivate *vipassanā* right thought.

39. How does right thought arise in *vipassanā*?

In meditation, the right thought does not literally mean thinking about something for a long time. The nature that directs the mind towards the object is right thought. Therefore, its characteristic is placing the mind on the object. In such case it can be translated as right aim.

40. What is the nature of *vitakka* in *vipassanā* meditation?

Although in general sense, *vitakka* means 'thinking' or 'pondering', in meditation it is not so. Swe-Taung-Goun Paṇḍitārāma Sayadaw gave a simile to explain this:

Say you have a plate full of apple cut into pieces. The 'aim' required to take the fork towards a piece of apple is similar to *vitakka* in *vipassanā* meditation.

41. Why do I feel sleepy when I practice *vipassanā*?

In meditation, one can feel sleepy if concentration (*samādhi*) is more and effort is less. But sleepiness is not always because of concentration. It can be merely because of laziness or weak effort. When the effort is strong, laziness cannot arise. It is also possible to feel sleepy if one is tired and needs some rest. Sometimes, even when one does not have any physical tiredness, the mind becomes tired due to *vipassanā* exercise.

42. Why do *Arahants* sleep if they do not have *thīna middha*? Do they dream while sleeping?

Arahants sleep to give rest to the body when it is tired. But they do not see dreams. Those who still have perversions (*vipallāsa*) see dreams. As Arahants

do not have perversions, they do not see dreams. (Mūlapaṇṇāsa Aṭṭhakathā II, 194; Aṅguttara Aṭṭhakathā III, 72)

43. How long should a *yogi* sleep?

The whole day a *yogi* should cultivate mindfulness by walking and sitting meditation. During the first watch of the evening (6:00-10:00) also a *yogi* should cultivate mindfulness by walking and sitting meditation. From 10:00 to 2:00 a *yogi* should take rest mindfully bearing in mind the wake-up time. After waking up, a *yogi* should again start the contemplation. This is the time-table recommended by the Buddha. (Aṅguttara I, 112)

44. Why some people cannot become *Ariya* though they have enough potential for that?

There are two main reasons for this:

1. Association with evil friend (*Pāpamittatā*): This is one of the reasons why one cannot become *ariya*. This can also refer to not having a good friend. An example is of a prince named Ajātasattu. Having followed the advice of an evil friend, he killed his own father in order to become King. Those who kill their own parents obstruct permanently their chance to become *ariya*. Although the prince had

enough *pārami* to become a *Sotāpanna*, he could not become an *ariya* because of killing his father.

2. 'Diminution of action (*Kiriyāparihāni*): It refers to not doing or practicing completely what is essential to do or to practice. This can happen in two ways: on the side of teacher and on the side of meditator.

If the teacher does not teach completely what is essential for the attainment of *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna*, then there is shortcoming on the part of teacher's duty. If the teacher does not teach completely the way to attain *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna*, how can the meditator practice? Some want to practice meditation but there is no teacher who teaches.

The teacher teaches well, teaches completely, but if the meditator does not listen carefully, does not practice, practices only little, practices but does not practice completely, then though the meditator is capable to attain *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna*, he/she cannot attain it.

Another story is of a lay devotee named Dhanañjani. If Venerable Sāriputta had preached *Dhamma* for the attainment of *Nibbāna* rather than the four sublime abodes (*brahmavihāra*), Dhanañjani would have become an *ariya*.

There is a story of a lay devotee name Pessa. He was endowed with wisdom essential for the attainment of *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna*. However, work was more important for him than the attainment of supramundane

states. As the Buddha was teaching him *Dhamma*, he took leave in the middle of the teaching saying: “Venerable Sir, please allow me to go. I have many works and many things to do.” (Majjhima II, 4; Sāratthadīpanī Ṭīkā II, 2)

Sometimes we practice meditation but deep in the mind we do not want to attain *Nibbāna*. This can be understood by a story of a man who always expressed his wish to attain *Nibbāna* in front of a Buddha statue. One day another man hid himself behind the Buddha image, and as that man was praying, he said in a strange voice, “Lay devotee, you have been expressing your wish for a long time. Today I will really send you to *Nibbāna*.” When the man heard this he said, “Venerable Sir, this is good. Please let me go back home and counsel with my wife.” (Nibbānakathā, 233)

Craving and attachment can also obstruct the Noble attainment. There is another story of a drunken man who wanted to sail to the other side of the river. He rowed the boat whole night but did not reach the other shore. He forgot to open the fetter that was tied to the bank.

Sometimes it is due to doubt that one cannot attain *vipassanā* knowledge and attain *Nibbāna*. Not having sufficient faith in the practice and in the teacher can create obstruction so that *vipassanā* knowledge and *Magga* knowledge cannot arise. Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw said that during the first month of his meditation practice, he did not experience any higher knowledge due to not having good faith. (Ariyāvāsa Tayadaw, 79)

45. Is it possible that a Noble person (*ariya*) does not know he/she is an *ariya*?

It is quite impossible for this to happen because after the attainment of *Nibbāna*, there is always the reviewing knowledge that reviews the Noble attainment. But an *ariya* may not know he/she is an *ariya* if the attainment was in past life. (Sammohavinodanī 406; Uparipaṇṇāsa Aṭṭhakathā, 75)

46. How does reviewing knowledge arise?

After the arising of *Magga* and *Phala*, the reviewing knowledge arises reviewing five things:

1. *Magga*
2. *Phala*
3. *Nibbāna*
4. Abandoned defilements
5. Remaining defilements

Hence, altogether 19 types of reviewing knowledge are possible. The *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmi*, and *Anāgāmi* can have all the five; but the *Arahants* can have only the first four. (Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha Vibhāviṇi Tīkā, 65)

47. Do all *ariya* review these five things?

Reviewing the *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna* definitely arise; but the last two may or may not arise. It is not possible that this reviewing knowledge does not arise. Some teachers say that one or two may also arise. (*Mūlapaṇṇāsa Aṭṭhakathā* I, 336)

48. What is the meaning of '*puthujjana*'?

There are several meanings of the term '*puthujjana*.' The three popular meanings are thus:

1. Most of the people: those who are not *ariya* are more than those who are *ariya*.
2. One who gives rise to much defilement: All the fourteen types of unwholesome states can arise in a person who is not *ariya*. Therefore, a person in whom much defilement of various types can arise is called *puthujjana*.
3. One who has many teachers: Some forms of doubt always remain in a person who has not experienced the *Nibbāna* by himself. As such a person cannot decide definitely, he/she can have high opinions towards different types of teachings and teachers. (*Sīlakkhandhavagga Aṭṭhakathā* I, 59)

During the Buddha's time, the female devotee Visākhā's father-in-law invited the naked ascetics to his home and offered requisites. He called Visākhā to come and worship the 'arahants.' Thinking that she would pay homage to real *Arahants*, she went; but when she arrived there and saw the naked ascetics, she became disgusted and returned back. This is an example of an *ariya*'s discernment as to right teacher.

49. How many types of *Puthujjana* are there?

Fundamentally, there are two types:

1. *Kalyāna puthujjana* (good): One who learns and contemplates about aggregate, bases, elements, and so on. One who knows impermanence, suffering, and not-self nature of mind and matter.
2. *Andha putthujjana* (blind): One who does not know and understand thus. (*Sīlakkhandhavagga Aṭṭhakathā* I, 59)

50. Can all ariyas attain *Phalasamāpatti*?

All *ariyas* can attain *Phalasamāpatti*. But some may have the ability to attain it whenever he likes and others may not be able to do so.

For example, an *Arahant* who always dwells cultivating meditation can attain *Phalasamāpatti* with ease, even after doing any other works. But an

Arahant who does not dwell with *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation, cannot enter *phalasamāpatti* when engaged in even small tasks.

Once, a teacher (who did not spend time cultivating meditation) and his disciple novice (who spent time cultivating meditation) were spending Rains Retreat in a monastery. As the novice could not find a suitable residence, the teacher was concerned about his dwelling place; and could not spend the time attaining *Phalasamāpatti*. But the novice was able to attain *samāpatti* during the three months. (Uparipaṇṇāsa Aṭṭhakathā, 46)

51. Is it possible to attain *Magga* and *Phala* while one is adopting postures other than sitting?

Yes, it is possible. In one whose faith is strong and is cultivating *vipassanā*, it cannot be said that there cannot be attainment of *Magga* and *Phala* when one is going, standing, sitting down, or eating. (Mūlapaṇṇāsa Tīkā II, 178)

Venerable Ānanda, the attendant of the Buddha was only a *Sotāpanna* when the Buddha lived. After the Buddha's *parinibbāna*, the first convention was held and only *Arahants* were given seats. It was the last night before the convention, and he was trying very hard to attain the higher stages of enlightenment. He became fully enlightened during the time when he was about to lie down to rest. Therefore Venerable Ānanda is known as a

person who attained Arahant hood while he was neither in sitting, standing, walking, or lying posture. (Sīlakkhandha Aṭṭhakathā I, 11)

52. Is it necessary to adopt sitting posture in order to attain *samāpatti*?

No it is not necessary. One can attain in any posture. But that would depend upon mastery over *samāpatti* in five ways.

53. Is it possible to know other objects such as sound while one is attaining *samāpatti*?

The mind cannot take other objects while attaining *samāpatti*. However, if the *samāpatti* is not totally pure other objects such as sound can also be known. The *samāpatti* is not pure if one has not gained mastery over the *samāpatti* in five ways. But knowing other objects is not within the *samāpatti*. If *samāpatti* is not totally pure, there is mixture of *samāpatti* and ordinary mind. When ordinary mind arises one may hear sound. When this happens one may think that one is hearing sound while attaining *samāpatti*. (Pārājikā Aṭṭhakathā II, 102)

54. How much theoretical knowledge is essential for *vipassanā* practice?

Dhamma knowledge is very important. If one has time one should learn. But if one is practicing with the help of a competent teacher, the knowledge that all conditioned things are impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anatta*), will suffice. (Mūlapaṇṇāsa, 318)

55. Can we attain *Nibbāna* if we practice *vipassanā* without expecting to attain it?

If you practice *vipassanā*, when the knowledge ripens, you will attain *Nibbāna*. There is a simile that helps to understand this point. A hen has to sit upon the eggs regularly and provide sufficient warmth. When the time comes, the chicks come out. If the hen just wishes but do not provide sufficient warmth, the chicks cannot come out. (Khandhasaṃyutta, 124)

56. How long does it take to become *ariya* if we practice *vipassanā*?

In the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Buddha said if one practices ardently following the instructions given in this Sutta, one can become *ariya* even within seven days. It is said that if someone has a teacher like the Buddha, one can attain even within a day.

Mahāsi Sayadaw taught meditation for about 50 years. He says that those who can describe the arising of *vipassanā* knowledge quite completely within seven days are very rare. Most can describe the arising of *vipassanā* knowledge quite completely after practicing for a month.

There is a simile of marks appearing in axe-handle. It takes a long time for the marks to appear at the place where one always holds the axe, and is very difficult to perceive the wearing out of the handle. Similarly, through meditation, the defilements become weaker and weaker and are completely uprooted by attainment of *Nibbāna*. But it cannot be said exactly how long it might take. To practice *vipassanā* regularly following the instructions given in *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is important. (*Khandhasaṃyutta*, 126)

57. Was Mahāsi Sayadaw an Arahant?

Many people believe he was an *Arahant*, or at least an *Anāgāmi*. If we see the books he wrote, it can be observed that he described and explained the supramundane states and attainments in minute details. It is very difficult to imagine how one could write those with mere imagination or through scriptural knowledge alone. We believe that he was an *ariya* but we cannot say of what stage. It is not within the range of a kindergarten student to fathom the wisdom of a PhD research scholar.

58. Do we need to make mental note in meditation?

The most important thing is to observe the nature of conditioned things as they really are. But without the mental note, there can be faults such as object and observing mind not coming together, inability to discern separately, decrease of effort. Therefore, it is taught to observe by noting in the mind. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, The Reason to Practice Meditation)

However, when knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga ñāṇa*) arises, it may not be possible to make a mental note of all the objects. At this stage, one should note whatever one can. The important thing is to observe the object as it arises and passes away. (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Vipassanā Shu Nyi II)

59. Should a person who has not attained *Nibbāna* (*puthujjana*) teach? Can there be benefit?

There are two types of *puthujjana*: blind *puthujjana* and good *puthujjana*. A *kalyāṇa puthujjana* who knows the practice well can become a teacher and teach. There are many cases where a teacher was *puthujjana* and disciple *ariya*.

A monk named Venerable Nāgasena was a *puthujjana* when his disciple became an *ariya*. After reflecting and contemplating based on his own teachings through which the lay disciple became *ariya*, he also became an *ariya*. (Milindapañha 15)

There was a lay devotee name Mātikāmātā. She was looking after a group of monks and supporting them with four requisites. Out of gratitude, the monks taught her meditation. She practiced meditation and became *ariya* even before rest of her teacher monks who were still *puthujjana*. (Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā I, 185)

60. How can we know which method is correct and which method is not?

Just before the Buddha entered *Parinibbāna*, he said if the Eightfold Noble Path is found in a spiritual path, it is possible that one can become an *ariya*. Another way to check is whether the defilements such as greed and hatred become less or not. If a certain practice contains the Eightfold Noble Path, and defilements become less, it is possible to say that that method is correct. (Dīghanikāya Mahāvagga 125; Aṅguttara I, 218)

61. How is the nature of *jhāna* present in *vipassanā*?

Between the beginning of the practice and before ‘knowledge of comprehension’ (*sammasana ñāṇa*), the five *jhāna* factors manifest clearly: initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), joy (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), one-pointedness (*ekaggata*). Therefore, during this time, whenever one meditates, it is similar to first *jhāna* that has five factors.

When one reaches the knowledge of rising and passing away (*udayabbaya ñāṇa*), there is no initial application and sustained application, and the joy and happiness arise very strongly. The mind is also very stable, and there is no distraction. Hence, at this point, whenever one meditates, it is similar to second *jhāna* that has three factors.

When one overcomes the ten impediments (*upakilesa*) the mature knowledge of rising and passing away arises. At this point, joy is not present, and happiness manifests distinctly. The mind is also very stable, and there is no distraction. At this point, whenever one meditates, it is similar to third *jhāna* that has two factors.

In the knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga ñāṇa*) and other higher knowledge, happiness is also not distinct; only the neutral feeling appears distinctly. Especially, in the knowledge of equanimity towards formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*), the nature of equanimity becomes very clear. In this way whenever one meditates, it is similar to fourth *jhāna* that has neutral feeling and one-pointedness.

Moreover, sometimes it seems that the body has disappeared and one has arrived to empty space. This is similar to first immaterial (*arūpa*) *jhāna*: the base of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*).

Sometimes, as only one type of mind arises, one has to observe only

that mind. In such a time, it is similar to second immaterial *jhāna*: the base of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*).

Sometimes, it appears that one is observing nothingness. In such a time, it is similar to third immaterial *jhāna*: the base of nothingness (*ākāṅkhaṇīyatana*).

Sometimes, as the mind that has arisen and the mind that observes both are very subtle, it appears that there is no mind. At this time, it is similar to fourth immaterial *jhāna*: the base of neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). (Mahāsi Sayadaw, Sallekha Sutta)

62. Is it suitable for a meditation teacher to tell if a *yogi* has attained *Nibbāna*?

About the attainment of *Nibbāna*, there is no one except the Buddha who can tell this. Mahāsi Sayadaw therefore says that he never told to the *yogi* his decision on the attainment of *Nibbāna*, not even on *vipassanā* knowledge. When the teacher feels confident about the practice of *yogi*, it is suitable for the teacher to explain about the arising of *vipassanā* knowledge, Path knowledge, Fruition knowledge, and reviewing knowledge. After listening to the explanation, the *yogi* has to decide himself/herself as to which knowledge one has attained.

63. Does an *ariya* proclaim what he has attained?

An *ariya* does not wish to proclaim what he has attained, just like a person who has discovered a pot of treasure. However, he/she wishes that others also attain quickly what he/she has attained. (Dīghanikāya Mahāvagga Aṭṭhakathā, 270)

64. What are the four causes of a state like ‘unconsciousness’ in meditation? Can a meditator confuse them with the attainment of Cessation?

Those four are:

1. Joy (*pīti*)
2. Tranquility (*passaddhi*)
3. Neutrality (*tatramajjhattatā upekkhā*)
4. Sloth and torpor (*thīnamiddha*)

Mahāsi Saydaw writes that when the five types of joy arises, the meditator might experience moments of a state like ‘unconsciousness.’ When strong tranquility arises, the meditator might experience moments where it seems as if he/she is just gazing without noting the object, without contemplating, without thinking. In such moments the meditator might experience moments of a state like ‘unconsciousness.’

The moments of unconsciousness can happen also because of neutrality when the meditator is effortlessly noting the objects. Sometimes, when the effort is less and concentration is high, a meditator can even fall asleep.

If the meditator meditates by noting numerous objects, observing deeply, the ‘unconsciousness’ due to tranquility, neutrality, and sloth can be overcome. (Vipassanā Shu Nyi II)

When one attains *Nibbāna*, there is cessation of conditioned things, of the arising and passing of the object that is noted and the noting mind. Just before this happens, the observance becomes more and more distinct. The final manner of switching from the final observance of rising and passing away to the cessation of formations also becomes very distinct.

65. Can an *Arahant* become unmindful?

An *Arahant* can never lose mindfulness. Therefore an *Arahant* is called ‘one who has gone beyond being unmindful.’ (Cūlavagga, 197)

66. Does an *Arahant* experience pain?

The *Arahants* experience only bodily pain, not the mental pain. The mind of an *Arahant* is well developed, well trained, and well tamed. Just like a giant

tree with branches and leaves, when wind blows, only the branches and leaves move but not the trunk; even so, the mind of the *Arahant* is unshakeable; when there is pain in the body, only the body moves not the mind. (Milindapañha, 247)

67. How many meaning are there of 'one way' explained by the Buddha in *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*?

The '*ekāyano*' is interpreted in five ways:

- 1) Single Way: It does not branch off into two.
- 2) This way has to be travelled alone. Primarily, it suggests two types of seclusion: bodily seclusion from other fellow beings, and mental seclusion from hindrances.
- 3) It leads to only one destination, from *saṃsāra* to *Nibbāna*. If one goes along this way, one surely reaches the destination.
- 4) This is the way of the One. 'The way of the One' means the way of the Buddha. It is the Buddha's Way because he discovers and teaches it.
- 5) It exists only in the Buddha's *sāsana*. (Dīghanikāya Mahāvagga Aṭṭhakathā, 335)

68. Why did the Buddha said everything in holy life depends upon ‘*kalyāṇa mitta*’?

A *kalyāṇa mitta* (noble friend) is the main cause of attaining the wholesome states. Therefore, the Buddha said so. For instance, it is because of the Buddha as a *kalyāṇa mitta* that many beings can practice the Eightfold Noble Path and attain the cessation of suffering. But it should not be misunderstood that a noble friend can make you enlightened or something like that. He/she can help you to take the first step, encourage you, and may give guidance. But it is you who have to use your wisdom, put effort, and strive along the path.

69. Is *Sotāpanna* free from ‘*issā*’ and ‘*macchariya*’?

The widely accepted view by meditation teachers and scholars is that a *Sotāpanna* is free from ‘*issā*’ and ‘*macchariya*’. However, based on some texts in the Pāḷi, some teachers say that they are still present in a *Sotāpanna*. If this is the case, it is certain the gross forms of *issā* and *macchariya* that can give rise to rebirth in woeful planes are not present in a *sotāpanna*. (Aṅguttara Nikāya I, 95)

70. What is Sayadaw's advice for us?

I have three advices for you:

1. “*Dhamma* really protects those who protect *Dhamma*; the *Dhamma* that is well practiced brings about happiness; this is the result of well practiced *Dhamma*; one who lives according to *Dhamma* does not go to unhappy realms.” (Theragāthā, 272)
So, please do as many wholesome actions as you can, and try to live your life following the *Dhamma*.
2. There is a clean lake. If a person stained with dirt does not go and clean himself, it is not the fault of lake.
There is a physician and a person is suffering from illness. If he does not go and see the doctor, it is not the fault of doctor.
A person is surrounded by enemies; and there is a safe exit. If that person does not run and escape through that exit, it is not the fault of exit door.
Similarly, there is a clean lake of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, teacher who can give you medicine, and the exit door from all kinds of suffering. Now that you have all these three things, please clean yourself well in the lake, take the medicine given by your teacher, and run out of the exit door. (Aṭṭhasālinī, 35)

3. When you have all the conditions necessary to practice *vipassanā*, try your best to cultivate *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Do not give up your meditation at any cost.

The Buddha always admonished thus:

“These are the foot of trees, these are empty huts, meditate [cultivate *samatha* and *vipassanā*]; do not become heedless; do not become regretful in the future; this is our advice to you all.” (Aṅguttara II, 77)

May all Beings Be Free from Suffering

May all Beings Be Liberated

Sadhu!! Sadhu!! Sadhu!!