With an Open Mind

Sayadaw Jhaneyya (Mya-Sein-Taung)

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Content

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Dhamma Talks by Sayadaw U Jhaneyya

Introduction

Note: The following Dhamma talks were given by Sayadaw U Jhaneya (Mya Sein Taung) during retreats in Singapore, Malaysia, and Burma. I do not translate the entire talks, but only the essential points.

Sayadaw U Jhaneya was trained in the Mahāsi system, yet he was an open-minded practitioner with extensive Dhamma knowledge. After becoming a meditation teacher, he frequently drew upon Mogok Sayadaw's Dhamma talks in his own instruction to yogis.

Today, he is well known both within Burma and internationally.

On the Mahāsi Satipaṭṭhāna System

Mahāsi Satipaṭṭhāna meditation is a fundamental mindfulness practice that all yogis should understand. The effectiveness of this system is evident in its longevity and widespread adoption.

The first meditation centre of this lineage appeared in 1911, in Myo Hla Town, where yogis U San Dun and others invited Mingoon Sayadaw U Nārada to teach. He taught there for two years. From there, the method spread to many towns and cities. Mahāsi Sayadaw, as his disciple, later played a key role in transmitting this teaching to the outside world.

(The continued vitality of this system—now for more than a century—demonstrates its practical success.)

[Note: Thaton Mingoon Jetavan Sayadaw (1868–1954) was originally from Mingoon, Sagaing. After teaching for two years in Myo Hla Town, yogis from Mawlamyaing (Lower Burma) invited him to teach there. On the way, when the train stopped at Thaton Town, the Sayadaw met a monk named U Kelasa, who invited him to stay and teach at his place. Gradually, more and more people came to practice. Therefore, U Kekasa and other senior yogis from various cities looked for a new place to establish a vihāra and residential buildings for yogis. In 1914, they named the place "Jetavan," and the Sayadaw became well known as the Thaton Mingoon Jetavan Sayadaw.]

Another Important Meditation Lineage: Saya Thet → Sayagyi U Ba Khin

Another important meditation system is the teaching lineage of Saya Thet (1873–1945). One of his most well-known disciples was Sayagyi U Ba Khin (1899–1971).

It appears that Saya Thet began teaching around 1897, giving this system a history of more than a century. Over this long period, it has benefited many yogis around the world. Therefore, the success of this system is also clearly evident.

The Mind as the Creator

The mind has two functions: knowing and doing.

The pure knowing mind is the enlightened mind. Because it merely knows, it does not create actions (kamma).

The doing mind, however, is a defiled or unenlightened mind. Because it acts, it creates kamma, and thus gives rise to dukkha.

Therefore, the *doing mind* is the creator of suffering. This is the “creator” that human beings unknowingly revere and obey. Whoever wishes to bring suffering to an end must contemplate this distinction thoroughly and carefully.

Dhamma Talks (given in Singapore)

(The following four talks were given in Singapore in 2008)

Talk One: On Latent Defilements and Sub-moments

The latent defilement operates in the unknowing mind. This unknowing mind does not clearly discern the three sub-moments of phenomena: arising, presence, and dissolution.

The active mind (javāna), however, does have the three sub-moments—this is anicca.

Kamma (here referring to kammic energy) also does not itself possess three sub-moments. Kilesa and kamma exist as accumulated energy, but volition (cetanā) is anicca. Energy itself is not directly known as anicca; however, when conditions are fulfilled, it produces results. These are inconceivable dhammas and cannot be grasped conceptually.

On Pain and Noting Practice

In some modern books it is said that yogis should not contemplate painful feelings unbearably. For someone who has not yet practiced sufficiently, it is not helpful to engage in such contemplation.

In the beginning stage, pain may overwhelm the yogi. Later, pain and noting may appear to proceed in parallel. Eventually, the noting becomes stronger than the pain, so that the yogi can clearly note the pain and it becomes bearable. This has been observed, for example, among Taw-Koo Sayadawgyi and his yogis.

On Distinctness of Objects in Noting

At the beginning of noting, contemplative objects may be distinct or indistinct. For example, during sitting, sensations such as touching may not initially be clear. Even when objects are indistinct, yogis must still note them.

As samādhi develops, objects become clearer. With an increasing number of discernible objects available for noting, insight knowledge develops accordingly.

Talk Two: Anusaya Kilesa and the Unknowing Mind

Anusaya kilesa (latent defilements) reside in the unknowing mind and are latent within living beings throughout the round of existence (saṃsāra).

Defilements that arise through sense objects and sense doors are called ārammaṇika kilesas—defilements conditioned by objects.

Practice in Daily Life and in Retreat

In daily life, it is often not possible to note phenomena continuously. When continuous noting is not feasible, one should at least reflect upon the Three Universal Characteristics or contemplate Dhamma. This point is very important.

In daily activities, such as speaking with others, one can develop goodwill (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), appreciative joy (muditā), and equanimity (upekkhā).
Other activities—such as travelling or waiting for a bus—can also be used for reflection.

However, in a meditation centre, continuous noting can and should be practiced more fully.

Protective Practices and Fearlessness

Monks who practice in forests, mountains, and cemeteries should recollect the qualities of the Buddha and cultivate mettā. These practices serve as protection against danger, disturbances, and fear.

There is no need to fear the unseen world (paraloka). What yogis should truly fear is greed (lobha) arising in the heart and mind.

For a deeper understanding of the mind’s nature, one should study the Mind Chapter (Cittavagga) of the *Dhammapada*.

On Not Controlling the Mind

Do not attempt to control the mind. If something arises, simply note it—that is, know it.

This is the natural functioning of the mind. For example, when thinking arises, it is simply known as thinking.

On Noting, Samādhi, and Insight

At the beginning, priority should be given to the noting method, which develops good samādhi. When samādhi becomes stable, the yogi should continue to note and observe phenomena.

According to Mogok Sayadaw, Ven. Nāgasena, and the Satipaṭṭhāna method, this practice is described as watching and observing.

In Burmese, the term *kyi* conveys the meaning of looking at, watching, or observing.

As practice matures, sati (mindfulness) and paññā (wisdom) develop together. Establishing mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna) allows wisdom to follow behind mindfulness.

Through this process, practice progresses from conceptual understanding (paññatti) toward ultimate reality (paramattha dhammas).

On Samādhi, Insight, and the Noting Method

Pure samatha cannot by itself transform into insight (vipassanā). This is the crucial distinction between satipaṭṭhāna-samādhi and samatha-samādhi.

- Noting develops samādhi.
- Observing is knowing the nature of the khandhas.

When pure samādhi is firmly established and then applied to observation, insight can arise. However, its strength may fluctuate: sometimes it weakens, and then it must be re-established again. This approach is found, for example, in the Thai Forest tradition and the Sayagyi U Ba Khin system.

By contrast, the noting method continuously develops samādhi without decline.

Equanimity and Its Nearest Enemy

The nearest enemy of equanimity (upekkhā) is delusion (moha).

When a person has the potential for enlightenment, various experiences may arise later in practice—such as frightening images, attractive forms, or unusual phenomena. These are disturbances, sometimes caused by unseen beings (paraloka).
They do not affect everyone, but they can disrupt those who are unprepared.

Talk Three: When Samādhi Is Strong, the Body Disappears

When samādhi becomes strong, the body may disappear in the yogi's mind.

There are three forms of self-view (atta-diṭṭhi):

1. **Diṭṭhi-atta** – self as view
2. **Taṇhā-atta** – self as craving
3. **Māna-atta** – self as conceit

With continuous mental noting, the body fades from prominence, and the yogi clearly knows phenomena as mind and matter (nāma–rūpa).

At this point, it becomes evident that: knowing consciousness and the existing object (i.e. mind and object) fit together precisely. From this alignment, insight knowledge arises, beginning with understanding of mind, object, and impermanence (anicca). The earlier (lower) insight knowledges follow the same principle.

Noting and Observing Are Not the Same

Mental noting and looking at (observing) are not identical.

- **Noting** is **sati**; it strengthens samādhi.
- **Looking at / observing** is knowing the **nature** of phenomena by centering awareness directly on them.

In Burmese usage:

- the words translated as *noting* and *looking at* (e.g., *mart*, *kyi*) may also be rendered as **watching and observing**.

However, language is limited. Some experiences cannot be fully captured by words. Therefore, one should not become lost in concepts or arguments.

The best way is **direct seeing**.

Simply **do the practice**.

On Noting, Centering, and the Balance of Practice

For example, by noting the sitting posture and the touching (contact with the seat), and by centering awareness on it, the yogi comes to know the hardness and softness of the earth element.

If the yogi's mind is restless, priority must be given to mental noting in order to establish samādhi. At this stage, one should not yet look closely at the object.

Later, as noting is maintained and samādhi develops, the jhāna factors—such as rapture (pīti), happiness (sukha), and tranquility—may arise naturally.

Mahāsi Sayadaw's Instruction

In Mahāsi Sayadaw's teaching, the practice consists of:

- **noting**, and
- **centering on the object**

(The Burmese term for "centering on" is *shū-site*.)

Mental noting and looking at (observing) must remain in balance.

- Some yogis only **look at / observe** objects.
- Others only **note**.

Both extremes prevent progress.

- Merely observing tends toward imagination and conceptualization.
- Merely noting, without observation, does not lead to insight knowledge (paññā).

Therefore, sati (mindfulness) and paññā (wisdom) must develop together—that is, the path factors must function in unison.

Essential Principle

Noting stabilizes the mind. Observing reveals the nature of phenomena.

When they are properly balanced, insight can arise.

Important Note

To gain a clear and correct understanding of Talk Three, reference should be made to Mogok Sayadawgyi's discourse, *Part 6: Two Views on Insight* (delivered on 12 September 1961).

Talk Four: Difficulties in Practice and the Right Path

There may be difficulties in practice. If the path is right, even if one does not arrive quickly, one will arrive gradually. Whether contemplation seems good or not good is not the main issue. What matters most is that one is on the right path.

If samādhi develops, the yogi should continue the sitting. If one stops while samādhi is present, the next sitting may not be as good. This highlights the importance of non-reaction, the Middle Way, and letting go.

Latent defilements will inevitably arise and disturb the yogi at any time. This is their nature. The duty of a yogi is not to remove them by force, but to contemplate them with equanimity.

Effort and the Four Bases of Power

In practice, effort is essential. This corresponds to the four bases of spiritual power (iddhipāda):

1. **Desire (chanda)** must be strong and wholesome.
2. **Mind (citta)** must be firm and stable—that is, samādhi.
3. **Effort (viriya)** must be consistently applied in practice.
4. **Investigation or discernment (vīmaṃsā)** is the act of noting by centering on the object.

For example, when greed or anger arises, one must note it by centering on it. If one treats it gently or indulgently, it cannot be overcome. Whether it disappears or not is not the important point. Wanting defilements to go away is itself craving (taṇhā).

The real purpose of practice is the understanding of dhammas, which is discernment (paññā).

Contact, Defilement, and the Puppet Analogy

An important point here is this: Whenever objects and sense doors make contact, they touch the unknowing mind, where defilements such as delusion or ignorance are present. These defilements arise and disturb us.

It is like a puppet show. We do not see what is happening behind the scenes. We do not see lobha–taṇhā (greed and craving) pulling the strings behind our actions.

By contemplating this deeply, one can understand the nature of defilements and the ways human beings react to them. Much can be learned from careful contemplation of these patterns.

The Three Unwholesome Roots

The phenomena of greed, anger, and delusion can overwhelm the knowing mind. Because of this, we often do not truly know or see what is happening.

(If we contemplate thoroughly how human beings relate to these three unwholesome roots, we can understand the sufferings and problems of the world.**)**

Why Should We Cultivate Insight? (Dhamma Talks, given in Malaysia)

(There are ten talks given in Malaysia in 2011. I am just making notes of them and combining them all together here.)

Ahetuka-diṭṭhi rejects the cause (it can be translated as a *causeless view*). Natthika-diṭṭhi rejects the result or effect (a *non-result* view). Akiriya-diṭṭhi rejects the law of kamma (it rejects both cause and result).

Identity view (sakkāya-diṭṭhi) arises by clinging to the five aggregates (khandha). Self-view (atta-diṭṭhi) arises by clinging to concepts (paññatti). They arise together, and the mind that takes them as mental factors of the mind is influenced and controlled by them.

Consciousness (viññāṇa) is special knowing—knowing of what? Feeling, perception, and mental formations. These are known by consciousness through differentiation.

Wisdom or discernment (paññā) is knowing through analysis, such as the Four Noble Truths, dependent co-origination, and the three universal characteristics, etc.

People with ordinary merits and perfections are unable to rely on and take refuge in the teachings of the Buddha, who possesses great merits, power, perfection, and holiness. They also cannot encounter him or remain under his influence. Therefore, you all have merits and perfections. Therefore, you must succeed in your practice. *(This is not mere encouragement.)*

Note: How many Buddhists are there around the world? It is far fewer than adherents of any other belief. Even among these few Buddhists, true Buddhists are rarer still. You cannot count the Chinese population alone as Buddhists. The majority of them are deity worshippers who only have faith in and take refuge in external powers.

If they declare themselves as Buddhists, it is often in name only. Why? Because deities and external powers are regarded as more important than the law of kamma. Even the Buddha cannot help everyone; he can help only beings who possess good merits and the appropriate potential. Buddhists who have

noble qualities should cultivate them, rather than merely seeking the fulfillment of prayers and wishes. Therefore, they should understand the five noble qualities taught in the suttas—saddhā, sīla, suta, cāga, and paññā—and cultivate them in daily life. This leads to the seven noble treasures, the becoming of a noble person, and the ending of dukkha.

Buddhists who wish to examine whether they possess merits and perfections can do so without difficulty if they have knowledge of the suttas. There are two suttas relevant to this topic: The Eight Faults of Inopportune Moments (AN 8.29, *Akkhaṇasutta*) and The Five Rarities (AN 5.143, *Sārandadasutta*).

I would also like to refer to a Dhamma talk by Mogok Sayadawgyi, Part 14, *The Five Rarities* (5th–7th April 1962).

Contemplation of painful feeling does not imply self-mortification; rather, it is to understand the nature of vedanā. This explanation is related to criticism of a lay teacher who taught dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna while overemphasizing it on the Middle Way. Sayadaw U Candimā did not accept this approach. Sayadaw U Thaneyya continued to discuss Thae-inn Gu yogis' experiences during ānāpānasati meditation (see my translation of U Candimā's teachings).

At the beginning of practice, both body and mind are painful. With extensive contemplation, the body may remain painful but the mind does not. The yogi is then able to contemplate and understand the nature of feelings as painful and as disappearing. Pain arises and passes away.

As Mogok Sayadawgyi said: *If you discern anicca, you are no longer concerned with vedanā.*

There are four types of full awareness (*sampajañña*): full awareness of the purpose of one's actions; full awareness of the suitability of one's means; full awareness of the domain, that is, not abandoning the subject of meditation; and full awareness of reality. If types 1, 2, and 3 are developed and completed, type 4 will arise (that is, 1, 2, and 3 are the causes for 4).

(Continuing on the subjects of *atta* and *anattā.)* People with few *kilesa* (defilements) perform actions for the welfare of human beings and the world. Because of fools and bad people, there are problems and suffering in the world; such suffering never arises through noble beings (*ariyas*).

Someone with sharp wisdom who becomes an arahant in a single sitting also begins from the lower path knowledges, but passes through them too quickly to be discerned one by one. It is like using a very sharp pointed nail on a pile of paper and striking it forcefully with a heavy hammer: the iron nail passes from the top to the bottom very quickly.

(Mention is made of experiences of the four elements in practice.) If the four elements change, yogis may have doubts without the knowledge of full understanding of what is known (*ñāta-pariññā*).

(This point is very important. Mogok Sayadawgyi reminded us of this frequently in his many talks.)

Yogis can be obstructed by wrong views in their practice. This can happen in many ways when *bhāvanā* is developing and one is near realization. It is important not to give up; if one gives up, the practice will collapse.

Therefore, in Mahāsi Sayadaw's Dhamma verse: "Do not be concerned for the body and life to be treated cruelly."

Note: No one dies in practice; only the body shows its cruelty through change (*vipariṇāma*). Yogis also have to show their cruelty to the *kilesas*. U Sun Lwin (Ven. Ādiccaramsī) also mentioned a Dhamma quotation in U Ba Khin's place as follows: "**Don't be concerned about it; with the concerning mind, it (the bowl of oil) will be slanted and overturned.**

(?? OR Don't be concerned about it; it (the bowl of oil) will be slanted and overturned with the concerning mind.

OR Do not fret over this; if you harbor worries in your heart, this (oil bowl) will surely tip over. ??)"

He already had a great deal of Dhamma knowledge at that time and was familiar with Mogok Dhamma, so he emphasized the importance of *ñāta-pariññā*. At that time, external disturbances were able to come in and destroy the practice (that is, worldly dhammas and unseen beings).

When pain becomes stronger, wanting to change is the mind; not wanting to change is also the mind. The nature of the mind is quite strange. When the noting mind becomes strong, it overcomes the mind that wants to change. This is done by noting the changing mind. A defiled mind is used to overwhelm the knowing mind. In worldlings, the defilement of mind is very strong. (because of long and powerful saṃsāric existence, it may be rotten inside.)

Meditation is a battle against the enemies of defilement. Therefore, whatever arises is to be overcome by noting. Yogis come to understand defilements by noting defiled states of mind and knowing them. This understanding arises from development (*bhāvetabba*): knowing, abandoning, and realization.

Vipassanā insight is the practice of knowing oneself.

(To know oneself is the Buddha's way, the Dhamma way, or the Ariyan way. To know external beings and things is the worldly way, the defiled way. Most world leaders and politicians cannot protect themselves or others, including nature. Most worldlings are full of darkness (the five kinds of darkness: ignorance and delusion); therefore, there are many problems and much suffering continuing again and again.

Only Dhamma education can make humans free from problems and suffering. Otherwise, the human realm declines toward hell, animal, and ghost realms. These also become their future **destinations.)**

Dhamma Reflection: Do mind and body have the same value?

Today, I and my *kappiya* (lay attendants) were talking about a water-heating machine and complaining about the low quality of most modern products. These products do not last long and are easily damaged. Today, humans are more centred on money than on quality, including the quality of themselves. In the past, businesspeople talked about quality rather than quantity; today, it is the opposite.

Then the *kappiya* suddenly made a remark: "Even the body can die at any time—why should the machine not break?" He missed my point, so I responded: "If you take the body and the mind as having the same value, you will never

progress.” This point is very important for humans to contemplate thoroughly, for their own welfare, for others, and for nature. Human evolution must be based on this understanding; otherwise, it leads to devolution.

In the *Khuddakapāṭha* Pāli, there is a very important sutta for every human being, namely the *Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta*. For me, it is as important as other suttas such as the *Maṅgala Sutta*, the *Metta Sutta*, and the teaching on the law of kamma. Previously, I did not know that monks used this sutta to teach laypeople. Recently, I listened to a talk given by Sayadaw U Uttama (Sagaing) based on this sutta, using the similes of the body as a clay pot and merits as gold pots.

The Buddha himself used these similes in the sutta. Our physical bodies are like clay pots. The merits referred to here are *dāna*, *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*, which correspond to the four gold pots. This also relates to *Dhammapada* verse 183:

> “The non-doing of all evil, the cultivation of what is wholesome, the cleansing of one’s own mind— this is the teaching of the Awakened Ones (all Buddhas).”

These verses are about *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. The four gold pots are connected to the five noble growths: *saddhā*, *sīla*, *suta*, *cāga*, and *paññā*. Many of the Buddha’s teachings overlap with one another.

In fact, our physical body is weaker and more fragile than a clay pot. It not only has the nature of change (*vipariṇāma*), but is also conditioned by many factors and causes. Whatever or however we look after it, it always leads to ageing, sickness, and death. The mind, however, is a different matter: our evolution or devolution depends entirely on how each of us trains it.

Most humans are perishing through attachment to the body. Strong desire, greed, and lust continually defile the mind. People cling strongly to lowly, momentary pleasures, engaging in all kinds of unskillful actions—of mind, speech, and body—day in and day out, except when asleep. In this way, they create suffering for themselves and for others.

The body has value only when we use it to cultivate merits: the noble growths and the seven noble treasures—*saddhā*, *sīla*, *hiri*, *ottappa*, *suta*, *cāga*, and *paññā*. Otherwise, it has no real value at all, bringing only troubles, problems, and

suffering. Therefore, the Buddha reminded us that the permanent homes of most living beings are the woeful planes of existence.

According to the Buddha, whoever possesses the four gold pots—merits—and fulfils the four powers of success (*iddhipāda*) in the highest sense may even become a Sammāsambuddha. Otherwise, if we treat the body like a devoted slave while constantly nourishing the defiled mind, we will inevitably encounter great suffering.

Every human being comes into this human world only temporarily. During the time of the Buddha Sāsana, people have the chance and the choice to decide which path to follow. One may choose suffering for oneself and others, or happiness for oneself and others. To choose happiness is also a very important duty, because no one loves *dukkha*, and everyone loves *sukha*.

Dhamma Talks given in Burma

The following Dhamma talks were given in Burma

Dhamma Talk 1: Noting and Observing

Yogis should not stop their practice if their noting is not clear, such as the rising and falling of the abdomen, sitting, or touching the floor. If one becomes lazy in the practice, one should undertake a *samatha* practice or Dhamma contemplation or recollection. Therefore, yogis should have some knowledge of the Dhamma—by listening to Dhamma talks, reading, or studying the suttas.

The five dhammas that living beings cannot stop from happening are birth, old age, sickness, death, and the debts (results) of unwholesome actions. By reflecting on these themes, one develops a strong sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) together with strong effort in practice.

He gives the example of a *Subrahma devatā*, one of the five hundred celestial nymphs, who were amusing themselves in a flower-tree garden and suddenly died and fell into hell due to their past kammic results. Yogis can practise recollections of the Buddha, death, and the repulsiveness of the body.

People may possess many merits such as *dāna*, *sīla*, and *cāga*. If they practise *samatha*, success can come easily. One should not look down on any merit, but should always remember the *Nidhikanda Sutta*.

Noting is to know the object. The saying that there is no need to note and that one only needs to know by observing is not correct. It is better if a yogi has both skills of *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Noting and observing are both important. With only noting, one cannot clearly discern impermanence (*anicca*). With only observing, *samādhi* does not properly develop, and even existing *samādhi* may decline. When both are cultivated together, *sati*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* develop in harmony.

Sometimes it is not possible to note continuously, but one can still observe continuously. Sometimes, if you cannot note, never mind—just do not let go of observing.

Merits based on greed (craving) give worldly results, but one has to be careful, as one can create demerits again (e.g., Devadatta, Ajātasattu, etc.). Merits must be the perfection (*pāramī*) of relinquishment. If one does not cultivate perfection together with knowledge, it will lead to suffering.

Note: Tipiṭakadhara Sayadawgyi, in a Dhamma talk, said: "The perfection merits of the Bodhisatta are greater than all the merits made by all living beings. The main cause is his intention and resolution solely to become a Buddha, for enlightenment alone. Therefore, his merits are never wasted and only increase more and more."

All other beings possess only ordinary merits of various kinds. Therefore, Mogok Sayadawgyi always warned his listeners to perform merits for perfection, which lead more quickly and surely to realization, and not to waste them or turn them into hindrances through a greedy mind.

In practice, yogis must have the courage to practise relinquishment. One must turn away from kinds of happiness that lead to *dukkha* (e.g., indulgence in sensual pleasure, indulgence in hedonism). Do not turn away from *dukkha* by avoiding it, but understand *dukkha* as *dukkha*. Worldlings, however, do the opposite—they are slaves of *taṇhā*.

Right practice comes from right knowledge. Therefore, one has to study the Dhamma through listening and contemplation (e.g., Mogok Sayadawgyi's Dhamma talks). A yogi who wants to end *dukkha* should stay with the objects of *samatha* or *vipassanā* every day, and should not waste time on defilements.

For example, in the Thai Forest Tradition, the object of mantra—*Buddho*—is well known. In the Chinese tradition, *Amitābha* (*A-mi-to-fo*) is widely practised. This is a very important point for yogis. See many stories of the *Buddho* mantra in Ajahn Mun's biography, and among his senior disciples, as well as hill-tribe practitioners, showing how it was used in daily practice—for example, Ajahn Mahā Boowa and Ajahn Jia Cundo.

Dhamma Talk 2: Realization Comes from Right Attention

Diṭṭhi is the main enemy (the defiled mind). If one cannot abandon wrong view, one cannot abandon craving, greed, and lust.

(This explains why humans are becoming increasingly greedy: material progress has brought many problems and much suffering.)

The cause of no progress in Dhamma practice is improper attention. Another important factor is neglecting the practice for various reasons. Only with right attention can one put effort into the practice and walk on the right path.

(Many people fall into superstition and rely on outside powers, even doubting the law of *kamma.* (This can be seen even among some Chinese Buddhists.)

For monks who are studying, recollection of death may cause them to lose interest in mere study.

[This is a good sign: whether monk or layperson, one is then inclined toward practice rather than merely increasing defilements.

In the past, a novice listening to the Devadūta Sutta (Divine Messengers Sutta, MN 130, *Majjhima Nikāya*) developed a strong sense of urgency (*saṁvega*) and became fearful. He requested permission from his teacher to practise first, and only after attaining the first stage of realization did he continue **his studies.]**

With improper attention to the nature of non-self (*anattā*), a yogi may relax effort and become indulgent, falling into a view of coarse materialism—believing that nothing exists beyond indulgence. In reality, *anattā* refers to the phenomena of cause and effect.

Renunciation (*nekkhamma-pāramī*) is the effort to make greed, anger, and delusion diminish. It is also included within other perfections. For example, practising *dāna* must be directed toward Nibbāna, where *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha* are extinguished. Giving in this way produces the proper result because it is free from defilements. It must be accompanied by the noble aspiration for Nibbāna alone.

One important point in vipassanā is that without noting and with only observing, one cannot attain the level of samādhi that is able to discern *anicca*. It is acceptable to observe after samādhi has been well developed (for example, in U Ba Khin's system); in that case, there is no need to note. However, there are different views. Without samādhi, saying that there is no need to note is wrong.

Knowing the arising of dhammas is done through noting. Noting develops samādhi. I am concerned that if one follows the wrong approach, when insight into *anicca* becomes sharp, quick, and mature, one may no longer be able to note it. When relying only on observing, the process may become slower and weaker, and one then needs to return to noting. Because of the method, things can go wrong; I myself have experienced this before.

If one relies on observing with samatha samādhi, samādhi may gradually weaken, and insight into *anicca* may also weaken. This is one reason why forest monks who rely heavily on jhānas and contemplations sometimes experience a decline in samādhi and need to re-establish it again (this is also seen in U Ba Khin's system).

Here, the Mahāsi system is effective because it is based on vipassanā samādhi. After samādhi has been attained—by whichever method—if one continues noting in the Mahāsi way, samādhi will not fall down.

Mental noting without observing is also not correct. At times, when it is possible to note, one must note; when it is not possible, one should simply observe. If one understands what has happened to the khandhas, that becomes knowledge. Therefore, one should note and observe only what is known; in this way, knowledge develops more quickly.

Noting prevents the mind from running away by regulating samādhi. In some situations, one cannot note, so one has to observe instead (for example, when talking with others).

Why is it necessary to note objects? It is to remain with the present moment and to know the changing nature of the present moment. For this reason, we have to note. During the noting process, yogis discern *anicca*. At first, yogis only know the arising of phenomena and cannot immediately discern *anicca*. Later, when samādhi becomes strong, the discerning of *anicca* follows.

One should not compare oneself with Mogok Sayadawgyi, because he possessed very sharp knowledge. According to sutta, it was mentioned to discern *anicca*, its disenchantment and its cessation.

(Mogok Sayadaw also taught in the same way but did not mention about mental noting. Here, Sayadaw U Jhaneyya emphasized the importance of noting before the discernment of *anicca*.)

Note: There are monks who interpret Mogok Sayadaw's way of practice differently, including teachers from the Mogok tradition. Many talks by Mogok Sayadaw never described the practice in detail from beginning to end. From the accounts of his close disciples—whether monks, lay practitioners—there is no mention of either a brief or detailed description of his practice methods. Only U Kyaw Thein once referred to his practice under the Sayadaw's guidance, yet his account merely outlines key points, which appear in the Sayadaw's brief biography. This was a great loss for Buddhists.

From the study of his Dhamma talks and his two biographies (i.e., by U Kyaw Thein and Sayadaw U Gosita), as well as from my own understanding, I hold a different view. In fact, U Kyaw Thein is the best candidate to write a complete biography and account of Sayadawgyi's teaching.

From my contemplation, Sayadawgyi was not a *sukkha-vipassanā* yogi, but rather a samatha-vipassanā yogi. There is evidence of this in some of his talks and biographies. Sayadaw possessed the skill of mind-reading and could predict certain future matters. In his daily activities, he did many things without using clocks, yet always knew the exact time.

Near his final passing away, Sayadaw was receiving unseen or divine beings four times, namely on the 11th, 14th, 15th, and 16th of October 1962. On the 17th, he passed away and entered eternal peace. To communicate with divine beings, jhānic power is required (please read Ajahn Mun's biography by Ajahn Maha Bua at *forestdhamma.org/books/*).

If one truly discerns *anicca*, one may later encounter rapture, happiness, tranquillity, light, and so on (i.e., the ten insight corruptions). With continued

noting, arising and vanishing occur instantaneously. When knowledge becomes sharper, one may no longer see the arising and perceive only the vanishing.

For example, when noting rising and falling (i.e., the breath passing through the abdomen), one may not see the beginning of the rising but only the end of the falling. During noting, the yogi has to note the prominent object. He has to give preference to noting the internal process of the khandha when there are (as example), bodily pain, and external sound arising. He has to neglect the sound.

After the pain has disappeared and there is no prominent internal object, note the external one. If mental sign objects arise, note them as well. If they do not disappear, do not pay attention to them; instead, contemplate an internal object, such as in- and out-breaths, or touching and knowing (i.e., sitting).

If one becomes interested in them (i.e., external signs), they do not vanish. Worse than external objects are one’s own imaginations.

Dhamma Talk 3: The Noble Dhamma of the Buddha

A Christian missionary school in the U.S. invited Sitagu Sayadawgyi to give a talk. The preacher who invited the Sayadaw always carried the *Dhammapada* and used it to give talks based on the essence of the Dhamma contained therein.

(The *Dhammapada* text is one of the most popular and favourite books in the world. Its effectiveness has had a great impact on Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. The Dhamma contains universal truths; it never becomes wrong or outdated. It was taught by the most noble being and the wisest person on Earth. If we follow it, we can solve human problems and sufferings for ourselves and **others.)**

If defilements arise and you are able to contemplate them, simply contemplate them. If you cannot overcome them, then reflect on or recollect the Dhamma. The benefits of Dhamma practice are:

1. In this life, overcoming sorrow and lamentation
2. Freedom from painful states (*apāyas*)
3. Arrival at good destinations (*sugati*)
4. Great knowledge and discernment, enabling realization of both path and fruit

(Here, he is encouraging people to learn everything that supports the practice and to choose any meditation system that suits one's character.)

Yogis should often listen to teachings on ways of contemplation that lead to correct practice. Noting relates to perception (*saññā*) and mindfulness (*sati*), while observing relates to discernment (*paññā*). (When both are developed together, they support right understanding and progress in practice.)

In the beginning, the practice progresses through sati and paññā, with much noting and knowing of the nature of phenomena, which leads to discernment.

We have to live our lives in order to gain merits (*kusala-dhammas*), general knowledge of the Dhamma, and insight knowledge. For success in any task, the following are necessary:

1. One must have noble desire (*chanda*)—here, compassion and discernment are important factors.
2. One needs knowledge based on critical analysis.
3. The ways of doing things must be right.

If we rely on kamma as "parents" (the Burmese expressions *kam-mother* and *kam-father*), there is no safety in saṃsāra.

(Note: this reflects the view commonly held by many Buddhists. It is very sad that most people know kamma only superficially, although it is profound and complex. Therefore, their faith in kamma is weaker than their faith in outside powers, such as deities or bodhisattvas. As a result, they believe in and rely on wrong practices and superstitions.**)**

One important point in insight practice is noting and observing. Noting develops sati and samādhi, while observing develops discernment (paññā).

Noting and focusing on the object develops insight. With only noting, samādhi is developed but discernment is not yet fully included. When samādhi develops further, the yogi begins to know the sabhāva-lakkhaṇa (the intrinsic characteristics of mind and matter), and later discerns anicca.

Asking yogis to practise noting and centring on the object is to help them know the nature of paramattha-dhammas.

In both noting and observing, noting is often more tedious. For example, try to note the entire process of eating food.

[Most people eat with moha all the time, deceived by defilements such as lobha. Thus, they only know gratification (*assāda*, sukha) and not its danger (*ādīnava*, dukkha).

Ledi Sayadawgyi taught that every worldly pleasure (*sukha*) is oppressive, surrounded by two kinds of dukkha—before and after. One can find this out for

oneself through daily life experience. Every Dhamma teaching can be directly verified **in this way.]**

Noting is knowing the arising nature of phenomena. At first, noting knows the nature of phenomena, and later discerns anicca.

Noting and observing are the seeds of the path factors and should not be looked down upon. (He mentioned stories of some children who practised the Mahāsi system and could describe their direct experiences in simple ways, despite having no knowledge of books—similar to Soon Loon Sayadaw. When monks tested them, they were able to enter fruition states.)

[According to Ledi Sayadawgyi, in the time of the Buddha there were more lay people who became ariyas than monks through satipaṭṭhāna meditation, that is, sukkha-vipassanā. In samatha-vipassanā, there were more monks than lay people. There were also more divine beings who became ariyans than **humans.]**

The discernment of anicca in feeling is seeing pain as arising and vanishing. When this process continues, gaps appear between experiences; therefore, yogis can bear pain. For example, pain arises, it is noted and observed, and then it vanishes.

In samatha practice (for jhānas), when the body becomes tired or painful, yogis may change posture. However, in insight practice, yogis practise patience and endurance. Only through this can one truly know the nature of the khandhas.

At Taw-ku Meditation Centre, yogis are required to sit for at least three hours.

[This well-known vipassanā centre is located in Taw-ku village, Mudon Township, Mon State. Taw-ku Sayadawgyi was similar to Soon Loon Sayadaw; he had been a village man before and had a family. His teacher was not Mahāsi Sayadaw, but, like Mahāsi Sayadaw, both had the same teacher: Thathom Mingoon Jetavan Sayadaw. He was also known as Moulmein Sayadaw because his monastery was located there.

Two Sri Lankan monks, Soma and Kheminda Theras, practised vipassanā under his guidance before World War II in Moulmein City. They were two of the

three translators of *The Path of Freedom*. They were influenced by a monk and later changed their views on the satipaṭṭhāna **system.]**

Some elderly women were even able to sit for five to six hours. If yogis are patient, their practice can overcome painful feelings. (This is not an exaggeration.

In Thai forest monasteries during wan-phra uposatha days, village grandmothers often sit for many hours, sometimes spending the whole night practising but not the laymen, whereas even some monks may rest for short periods. There are often more women than men listening to Dhamma talks and participating in meditation retreats. Women generally have more opportunities to accumulate merit than men—as daughters, wives, mothers, and grandmothers. Every morning, those who prepare and offer food to monks are mostly women; some are even young girls. As human beings, women often accumulate more merit than men. This may be one of the main reasons why there are more female devatas than male devatas in heaven.

Overcoming painful feelings does not mean that vedanā no longer exists. Rather, painful feeling may change into pleasant feeling or into neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. When one understands the nature of feeling, one no longer fears pain. By overcoming feelings in this way, yogis are able to sit for longer periods.

Thae-inn Gu Sayadaw said that insight contemplation is training for death. An experienced yogi will not fear death when it approaches.

Dhamma Talk 4: On Defilements

(The following talk is based on the well-known sutta *The Simile of the Great Log*, Sutta No. 241 (4), Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta.)

The majority of human beings overindulge in pleasure and gain. Only a few people—namely noble, wise, and virtuous individuals—are able to sacrifice and relinquish these attachments.

[The first group may possess merit, but lacks wisdom and the capacity to abandon defilements. The second group possesses both vijjā (knowledge) and caraṇa (conduct).

The first group includes some world leaders, politicians, and wealthy individuals. They know only how to indulge in sensual pleasures, thereby wasting their precious opportunity to benefit the **world.]**

Therefore, in the present world there are many problems and much suffering. Two qualities are especially important for spiritual growth: compassion and wisdom. Compassion gives rise to the willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of others. Wisdom enables one to act effectively and appropriately.

Practitioners should understand the nature of the mind. Seeing-consciousness, hearing-consciousness, and other sense-consciousnesses are all forms of consciousness belonging to the cognitive process—vithi-citta, the knowing mind. The surrounding societies of not-knowing moha strongly influence people who have three wholesome roots (tihetuka); for example, just as the child of a fisherman often becomes a fisherman (though other factors may also play a role). In essence, the mind is frequently dominated by sensual desire and defilements, which overwhelm it.

As a result, yogis often give various reasons for being unable to practise. Repeated improper attention gradually becomes habit—that is, character. When there is a strong habit of indulging in sensual pleasure, this habit matures into character and clinging. Whether character becomes wholesome or unwholesome depends on attention. Character and clinging eventually become latent

dispositions; when these dispositions are strong, powerful defilements (kilesa) arise.

Latent defilements do not have the characteristics of arising, presence, and passing away (that is, the three sub-moments). I explain these matters because yogis may otherwise take defilements too lightly or approach them in a careless manner. Living beings take rebirth beginning with greed and craving. Latent dispositions do not exist as material entities, but as strengths of force or energy—similar to electrical or magnetic power. They continuously overwhelm the ordinary mind.

For this reason, all defiled minds are called unknowing minds. They are unable to properly take the object, and instead overwhelm the knowing mind, which otherwise would be capable of apprehending the object clearly.

For example, when one sees a physical form, eye-consciousness arises. However, the defiled unknowing mind overwhelms seeing-consciousness, preventing discernment of the arising and passing away of mind and matter. Instead, one perceives “a man,” “a woman,” “a person,” “someone beautiful,” or “someone attractive,” thereby missing reality.

Insight meditation works to reduce the energy of defilements—that is, to battle and weaken the kilesas.

Therefore, I ask you to contemplate by focusing properly, not by allowing defilements to enter. When samādhi becomes well established, seeing is just seeing, hearing is just hearing, and so forth, arriving at the level of equanimity (upekkhā). At that point, wanting, clinging, and action do not arise. This is the cessation of kilesa, specifically ignorance (avijjā) and craving (taṇhā), which otherwise overwhelm the unknowing mind.

Thus, defilements cannot be penetrated by practising lightly or casually. Views such as “when tired one must change posture” or “when itching one must scratch” are incorrect.

[Referring to a meditation system taught by a lay teacher who expounds a version of the Middle Way.]

(Continue to explain the ten insight corruptions.)

Faith (saddhā): the yogi wishes to offer one's life to the Buddha. Effort (viriya): with strong effort, the yogi does not wish to sleep and is able to continue contemplation. Mindfulness (sati): with strong sati, the yogi is unaware of time passing and may even continue contemplation within dreams, resuming contemplation immediately upon waking.

The simile of a log sinking in the middle of a river means that even though the yogi does not cling to self or others, one may still cling to one's practice of Dhamma itself.

When samādhi and ñāṇa develop, experiences such as light, rapture, and tranquillity may arise. Yogis may not contemplate it and take it as realisation. Body Light: Body light can appear and yogi takes it as realisation of path and fruit. Sometimes yogis fall into sleep and mistakenly believe this to be the cessation of suffering. **(See** the explanations of wrong cessations in Sayadaw U Ñāṇobhāsa's talks.**)**

Rapture (pīti): gooseflesh may arise. Tranquillity (passaddhi): the yogi can sit longer because body and mind become calm. Happiness (sukha): body and mind feel pleasant. Knowledge (ñāṇa): When knowledge becomes sharp, employed for criticism or judgmental analysis, it misses the essence of phenomena and becomes entangled in excessive reflection.

The simile of the great log being lifted onto higher ground refers to conceit (māna). Because of one's experiences, one may look down on others and become conceited.

Reflection: Some Reflections on Abhidhamma

I have found that knowledge of Abhidhamma teachings, together with the study of the suttas, brings great benefit. Abhidhamma provides the supportive conditions for understanding the suttas more penetratively and profoundly. However, there are some scholars and Buddhists who believe that Abhidhamma

was not taught by the Buddha and therefore should be neglected, and they even encourage others to adopt the same view.

Sometimes it is quite astonishing to see that some people lack basic common sense. What kind of human beings—philosophers, scientists, politicians, economists, or religious leaders—could independently discover and expound Abhidhamma? According to the records, only the Buddha was capable of doing so. The Buddha expounded Abhidhamma in the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods (Tāvatiṃsa) and later related it to Sāriputta, who passed away before the Buddha. Therefore, during the First Council, no one was able to recite it. This may be one reason why Abhidhamma was not formally recorded at that council.

This does not mean that we should accept everything blindly from the texts. Ledi Sayadaw himself was a very good example of critical inquiry. I have read some of his Dhamma **Dipanis** and found that he adopted a critical approach toward the commentaries, always examining them from a practical perspective, such as in his treatment of paramattha-dīpanī topics. Consequently, his views sometimes differed from those of certain commentators.

I have also read a Dhamma book by Mahāgandhāyon Sayadaw (Ashin Janakabhivamsa). This work consists of a long series of Dhamma discourses on Paṭṭhāna (Conditional Relations). In several places, Sayadaw explained Abhidhamma through the framework of the suttas, and at other times explained the suttas through Abhidhamma. In this way, it greatly enhanced our understanding of the Dhamma.

For the realisation of Dhamma, the teachings of the suttas alone are sufficient. However, I have never encountered anyone who studied Abhidhamma and became stupid or deluded. On the contrary, such people tend to develop bright and sharp minds, as seen in figures such as Ledi Sayadaw and Mogok Sayadaw.

The opposite result can also occur. People who possess a great deal of worldly knowledge—much of which is unnecessary, such as that from modern media—are often led into confusion, polluting the mind and increasing defilements (kilesas). People become lost in worldly knowledge and never progress in the Dhamma; instead, they engage in excessive proliferation and thinking. We can see the consequences of this clearly in today’s world, even at the international level.

A simile or analogy arose in my mind. It is like comparing the Himalayan mountain and an egg. Worldly knowledge is like an egg, whereas Abhidhamma knowledge is like Mount Himalaya. If an egg were to strike Mount Himalaya, what would happen? Only the egg would break into pieces. Anyone who uses worldly knowledge to measure the Dhamma will inevitably fail.

Dhamma Talk 5: On the Mind

Do not follow the desires of the mind, but also do not suppress or torture it. The mind takes pleasure in unwholesome objects and will never free itself from sensual pleasures by following desire alone.

If one wishes to understand the mind, one must listen to Dhamma talks and practise. The nature of the mind is difficult to train. It is accustomed to roaming among sensual objects and is quick to react.

One cannot train the mind lightly; one must apply greater effort. Practice must be forceful and consistent. Always examine one's own mind rather than the minds of others. One must teach and exhort the mind through samatha and vipassanā. This is the Middle Way, which neither follows desire nor suppresses it—avoiding both hedonism and extreme asceticism.

Otherwise, the process becomes short-circuited, failing to continue through contemplation of arising phenomena. For example, when greed arises and indulgence follows, imagination chases after desire, and defilements increase—as is commonly seen in the modern world.

You must contemplate all arising mental states from behind, through sati. Watching from behind is sati; knowing their nature is paññā. At first, paramattha and conceptual (paññatti) objects are mixed together, and one sees mainly the concept.

For example, when noting the arising of the abdomen, one may see "the abdomen" itself and is not yet free from the concept.

Sati becomes strong through noting conceptual objects; viriya and samādhi follow behind it and also become strong (see Mogok Sayadaw's talks). Paññā follows later; it does not arise instantly. It also depends on the type of object. Paññā follows behind saddhā, sati, viriya, and samādhi—these are the five faculties and powers as they develop.

The contemplative knowing mind stays momentarily on the contemplated object. It is something like this: water waves are moving up and down, while a frog sits on a lotus leaf that rises and falls with the waves. For example, when contemplating the rising and falling of the abdomen, the lotus leaf is the abdomen,

the wave is the air element, and the frog is the contemplative ñāṇa. With sufficient contemplation, the special knowing of perception arises.

It does not appear as the “abdomen” to yogi; rather, it is known as the movement of air, seeing its true nature.

The helpers of ignorance and volitional formation are doubt and heedless. The helpers of discernment are proper attention and effort. Knowing the nature of phenomena comes from noting with sati. With good sati, viriya, and samādhi, discernment follows behind them.

One must understand the nature of the mind and how it needs to be trained. In insight contemplation, it is very important to contemplate the mind. Even though one may contemplate other objects such as form and feeling, more emphasis must be placed on the mind. The mind always intrudes and disturbs the yogi from the beginning, through the middle, and to the end of the insight process.

When contemplating feeling, the aim is not to eliminate or make it disappear, but to understand its nature. The same applies to knowing the mind. The mind is like the eye and finger that look at others and point outward—yet must itself be understood.

Noting & Sati

Through noting and sati, the yogi knows the nature of the mind. When insight knowledge becomes mature, one may no longer be able to note in the same way. At that time, only watching and observing remain. This has its own level that follows the noting stage. In the Mahāsi system, the progression is from noting to observing—the noting-and-observing level becomes pure observing.

You cannot skip or pass over this stage. Even though people perform merits, if these are not accompanied by sati and paññā, they can still give rise to dukkha—suffering and problems.

[There are many examples, both in the time of the Buddha and among modern Buddhists. For instance, in the name of compassion and love, people may act blindly, without sati and paññā, thereby creating many external problems.]

Reflection: On Oneself and Others

(A Dhamma reflection based on a Dhamma talk by Sayadaw U Uttama)

Na paresam vilomāni, na paresam katākatam, attanova avekkheyya, katāni akatāni ca.

Focus,

not on the rudenesses of others,
not on what they've done
or left undone,
but on what you
have and haven't done
yourself. — *Dhammapada, verse 50 (translated by Ven.* Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu*)*

This is a valuable teaching in the Pupphavagga (The Chapter on Flowers). (See *Pāveyyaka Ajivaka Vatthu*.) There are three important points in these verses.

(1) We should not focus on the rudeness of others.

These are verbal and physical actions.

(2) Also, do not focus on what others have done or left undone.

(3) Rather, focus on what one has or has not done oneself.

The above three points are related to mental action (mano kamma). Points (1) and (2) concern thinking about others, while point (3) requires thinking about oneself. Humans always perform actions through body, speech, and mind. These actions can be wholesome or skillful, and unwholesome or unskillful. These actions, or the law of kamma, are very important for one's suffering and happiness.

Among these actions, one becomes increasingly extensive and complex, for example: bodily action → verbal action → mental action. Killing a human being → frivolous talk → unwholesome mental actions. There is much to contemplate here, from social levels to international levels. We can apply the ten wholesome and unwholesome courses of action.

Killing a human being is very rare in most societies, except in the U.S.A. because of gun laws. However, frivolous talk happens very often and everywhere, especially in the media such as television, the internet, radio, smartphones, and so on. There are many examples.

Most human mental actions—thoughts and thinking—are related to unskillfulness or unwholesomeness. This may be one of the main reasons beings are mostly reborn in the four woeful planes of existence (apāyas). With wrong views come wrong thoughts (all kinds of thoughts), which lead to wrong speech and bodily actions (of all kinds).

Therefore, Dhamma education, or Buddha's education, is the noblest and best education for human beings. Only through the Buddha's teaching can humans have right view and follow the right path. Otherwise, humans usually hold many kinds of wrong views and follow the wrong path—constantly increasing kilesas and harming themselves and others (even nature).

Why do we suffer in our minds? Because we think for suffering. But if we think for happiness, we will become happy (as in the Dhammapada story of verse 50, about the rich lady).

We have wasted our time by thinking about others and created much unskillfulness than developing merit. We have neglected our precious time and opportunities by thinking about others.

We do not know how to use our time well or how to think for ourselves.

In the world, we are not alone; we live among our surroundings and other people such as family members, friends, and others. Therefore, apart from oneself, all other people are "others." It is very important to know how to think and behave toward oneself and toward others. This is also very practical in daily life and lived experience.

Therefore, the most important point here concerns one's own true happiness —how to have proper, appropriate, and wise attention in all situations. This protects oneself and also protects others, and vice versa. This is also related to directing oneself rightly, as taught in the Maṅgala Sutta, which describes the most important blessings or protections in this present life and in future lives to come.

The well-known Burmese monk Tha-pye-kan Sayadaw instructed us to follow these teachings and practise accordingly, as taught in the Ambalaṭṭhikā

Rāhulovāda Sutta (Majjhima Nikāya, Sutta No. 61). The essence of the instruction and practice is this: before engaging in mental, verbal, or bodily actions, we must first reflect on whether the action will be beneficial or harmful to oneself and to others.

Mostly, when we focus on others, kilesas increase. When we focus on ourselves, kilesas decrease because knowledge arises.

To support these points, I would like to refer to two Jātaka stories: Jā. 459 Paṇḍita-jātaka and Jā. 490 Pañcūposatha-jātaka, both found in Volume IV. To focus on oneself is to understand oneself—this is Dhamma practice. To focus on others is the way of the world, which leads to dukkha, because we become lost in the world.

The Buddha taught ten reflections for monks. Among them, there are three reflections that relate to everyone, and we should often reflect upon them. These are:

1. I must be separated from everyone and everything that is dear and agreeable to me.
2. I am the owner of my actions (kamma); I am the heir of my actions. I have actions as my origin, actions as my relatives, actions as my refuge. Whatever action I do—good or bad—that I will inherit.
3. How am I spending my nights and days?

These reflections should be contemplated again and again in our daily lives. They lead us toward wholesome directions. If we add another two reflections, we will have six in total:

4. I am subject to ageing; I cannot escape ageing.
5. I am subject to illness; I cannot escape illness.
6. I am subject to death; I cannot escape death.

(See Sutta No. 48, *Things*, Book of Tens, and Sutta No. 57, *Themes*, Book of Fives, both in the Aṅguttara Nikāya.)

Dhammapada Verse 50 can be related to the group of princes to whom the Buddha addressed his teaching. They were searching for a prostitute. This is an

example of focusing on others and on the external world, which most worldly people do. It is like a mad person collecting rubbish and thinking it is treasure. They met the Buddha, who admonished them that the most important search for human beings is not to search for others, but to search for oneself.

To search for others increases defilements; to search for oneself leads to true happiness and peace.

Therefore, to search for oneself is a noble search or quest. This is also a very rare duty in the Buddha's dispensation (*Buddha-sāsana*). Nobody wants suffering and stress; everyone wants happiness and peace.

Thus, this is an important duty that has two stages:

1. to know oneself, and
2. to care for oneself.

This is the end of dukkha.

Dhamma Talk 6: On Feelings

We must use meditation objects that are suitable to our individual characters. For example, a greedy character should contemplate feeling (vedanā). Feeling often manifests clearly in the body, but one should contemplate whatever feeling is arising and is most evident at the moment, as this depends on circumstances.

People with anger or discernment-based characters should contemplate Dhamma (*dhammānupassanā*), that is, whatever arises at the six sense doors, discerning its impermanent nature (*anicca*).

A deluded character (moha) should contemplate the body (kāya). For instance, some people is used to nodding off while sitting. (I once met a Western monk who was used to nodding off often while sitting; before ordination he had been addicted to drugs.) Such practitioners may not yet be able to contemplate impermanence directly; they can only note phenomena.

To contemplate anicca means to note and incline the mind toward the object and to see that it does not truly exist—that it has already passed away. Paying close attention to the object through noting is, in itself, contemplation of impermanence.

Even Buddhas and arahants do not “know” phenomena automatically; they know through by paying attention. New yogis often only note and do not yet observe deeply. Experienced yogis, however, both note and observe.

Each yogi encounters painful feeling differently. Some experience it early in practice, others later. One should not become discouraged. When the spirit is low, samādhi weakens. For example, pain may arise in the morning but not in the evening, or disappear as time passes. Yogis may miss noting when pleasant feeling arises, yet become disheartened when pain appears.

Do not miss any arising phenomenon. All phenomena—pleasant or unpleasant—are momentary, unstable, and constantly changing. One should not contemplate pain with the desire to overcome it if the mind is dominated by lobha (craving). Another wrong approach is to fight or battle pain forcefully, which is rooted in anger.

Both of these approaches must be abandoned.

How to Contemplate Feeling

How should feeling be contemplated? One must contemplate in order to know its nature. This is the nature of feeling: it is not a person, not a being.

A yogi once asked me about a statement found in a Dhamma book: "If one contemplates pain merely as 'painful, painful' (by noting), and dies with that perception of mind may fall into painful states of existence (*apāya-bhūmi*)." So how, then, should feeling be contemplated?

If there is no listening to Dhamma talks and no understanding of Dhamma, a person who is near death—oppressed by disease—may cling to the concept "my body is painful." This becomes improper attention, rooted in wrong view (diṭṭhi) and craving (taṇhā). At that time, the person experiences bodily and mental pain and, if dying in such a state, may fall into the lower realms (*apāya*).

In correct contemplation, one does not attend to the body or body parts, but attends only to feeling as a dhamma. Noting pain as pain is mindfulness (sati); knowing its nature is wisdom (paññā). Therefore, with noting, sati, and paññā, even if death occurs, one will not fall into the apāyas.

If a dying person can separate the mind from the body, they can endure pain and die peacefully. (See Sayadaw U Candimā's *Bhavaṅga Meditation*.) According to Mogok Sayadaw, if a yogi discerns impermanence (*anicca*), painful feeling is no longer experienced as pain.

Some people criticise blindly without practising themselves. Mahāsi Sayadaw explained this matter clearly in many ways in his books. In the early stages of practice, when samadhi is still weak, pain manifests through the body; as samadhi strengthens, the location of the pain becomes less distinct. As samādhi improves, the painful nature and the knowing nature become distinct to the yogi.

At that stage, concepts and bodily form dissolve at the level of feeling, and the mind rests on the nature of feeling itself. When this happens, wrong view (diṭṭhi) falls away.

There are three ways of contemplating feeling (such as pain):

1. **Direct, face-to-face contemplation:** One does not avoid pain but centres on it through contemplation. Even though it makes one become tired, one can

realise Dhamma quickly. Following pain with mindfulness, happiness will arise. **[As in** Ajahn Mahā Bua's experience, he was able to sit for an entire night until morning without **moving.]**

2. **The ambush method.**
3. **Contemplation with samādhi strength.**

Note: The above three ways of contemplation are taught by Mahāsi meditation teachers.

Contemplating Pain: Endurance, Strategy, and Skill

[Certain Burmese monks practise direct, face-to-face contemplation of pain until it is overcome—for example, Soon Loon Sayadaw, Thae-inn Gu Sayadaw, and Sayadaw U Candimā who taught Diamond Meditation and Bhavaṅga Meditation.]

At times, the situation can become unbearable. In such moments, one should contemplate with patience and endurance, reflecting on the great sufferings and pains of hell realms. Some yogis, when oppressed by painful feeling, shift their attention and think of pleasant experiences they had in the past. When this happens, craving (taṇhā) enters the mind.

If insight knowledge develops, the oppressive, unstable, and uncontrollable nature of the aggregates (khandha) becomes clear. Even though pain is present, it can be borne. The mind becomes happy through tasting the Dhamma, and suffering is no longer dominant. If one changes posture merely because the pain is unbearable, one should not give up the practice entirely.

The ambush method is used when the enemy (pain) has strength that cannot be faced directly. In this case, one should temporarily stop direct contemplation of pain and instead return to another object—such as touching and knowing (e.g. sitting and knowing the touch points), which is one of the basic objects in the Mahāsi system. Another basic object is the rising and falling of the abdomen.

The yogi should note these objects quickly and with intensity, while still knowing that pain is present, but without directing attention straight at it. This reduces the intensity of pain. When touching and knowing are continuous, the noting mind overwhelms the pain. After that, one can return to pain again for contemplation.

(Here, I refer readers to Sayadaw U Candimā's instructions on ānāpāna samādhi, which are similar to the method described above. See my translation, *A Noble Search*.)

One should not speculate about the level of insight one has attained. Perhaps one can conquer suffering; if not, it may still transform into a sense of joy. (For everything that has a beginning must also have an end.)

Pleasant Feeling, Equanimity, and Progress in Insight

If pain changes into pleasant feeling (sukha), the yogi must also note it and should not follow it. Otherwise, the level of insight knowledge will decline.

It is suitable to practice with samādhi strength method—especially for elderly practitioners—the yogi should contemplate the primary objects of sitting practice: touching and knowing, or rising and falling of the abdomen. As samādhi develops, pain decreases. At that point, one should return to noting pain again. With the strength of samādhi, insight knowledge develops more slowly, the realisation of Dhamma takes longer time.

Three Ways of Contemplating Feeling

(From the Sakkapañha Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya, Sutta No. 21)

1. **Contemplate painful feeling by enduring it**—it was like prying out a thorn with another thorn in the foot.
2. **Contemplate pleasant feeling as suffering**, because every pleasant feeling exists between two painful states.

3. **Contemplate neutral feeling as impermanent and unstable**.

Yogis should not delight in sensual pleasures, as this wastes precious time and can lead to the lower realms (apāyas). Laypeople, in particular, should reflect deeply on this. However, yogis may experience pleasant, painful, or neutral feelings in relation to practice, and this does not lead to apāyas. By contemplating these vedanās, especially during or near death, one can even realise Dhamma at death or in the next life (see Sotānugata Sutta, sutta no. 191, Book of Fours, Aṅguttara Nikāya, AN 4.191).

Insight Knowledge and Happiness

When a yogi reaches knowledge of rise and fall (udayabbaya-ñāṇa) and equanimity knowledge, the taste of Dhamma arises. This happiness is superior to worldly happiness. If rapture or happiness arises, it must be noted, because these states do not last. Without noting, Dhamma cannot develop.

At the higher stages of insight, one must apply continuous effort to overcome the ten corruptions of insight. These signs indicate that a practitioner may become a noble one (ariya) in this life—at least a stream-enterer.

Do not assume that only happiness indicates progress in Dhamma. The arising of painful feeling does not mean lack of progress. In some cases, pain increases as insight deepens.

(This can be seen clearly in U Sun Lwin’s experience, described in *Eighteen Days in Solitude*.)

Elevating the Faculties and Contemplating Feeling

At this stage, yogis must strengthen the faculties (indriya)—especially faith, mindfulness, and effort. By doing so, they can attain higher insight knowledge. One should contemplate pleasant feeling (sukha-vedanā) as suffering, and incline

the mind toward discerning rise and fall as suffering, knowing it as changing dukkha (vipariṇāma-dukkha).

Neutral feeling is subtle and unclear. If it is not contemplated, delusion (moha) easily arises. Therefore, when the object of contemplation is not clear, the yogi should contemplate the contemplating mind itself—that is, observe the following or proliferating mind.

With respect to the three kinds of feeling, one should contemplate painful feeling (dukkha-vedanā) through noting in order to overcome it; otherwise, displeasure (domanassa) arises.
If one is unable to contemplate pleasant feeling, greed (lobha) arises.
If neutral feeling is not clearly known, it turns into delusion.

When a yogi can discern impermanence (anicca) through contemplation, lobha, dosa, and moha do not arise, and the process of dependent arising (paṭicca-samuppāda) is cut off.

(Understanding dependent arising—both as a process and as a teaching—is therefore extremely important for one's practice. Hence, one should study and reflect on Mogok Sayadaw's Dhamma talks.**)**

Insight Contemplation and Sabhāva-Lakkhaṇa

In insight contemplation, if one contemplates by directly attending to the object, one will discern its sabhāva-lakkhaṇa—its individual or intrinsic characteristic. This knowing occurs in the present moment.

Sabhāva-lakkhaṇa refers to the nature of non-self—not a person, not a being, but an intrinsic phenomenon. For this reason, it is also spoken of as an element (dhātu). This is knowing the paramattha (ultimate) nature.

If one knows the arising of a phenomenon and also knows its vanishing, and contemplates thoroughly, one knows the beginning, the middle, and the end.

Dhamma Talk 7: Focusing and Thorough Contemplation

Contemplation by focusing and contemplation by thoroughness are not the same. Focusing refers to attending to the present object as it arises and fitting awareness to it. Thorough contemplation refers to discerning impermanence (anicca) by knowing the condition nature of phenomena and their characteristics.

Clarification on Focusing and Thorough Contemplation

[Note: One should not confuse the usage of "focusing" and "thorough contemplation" as explained by Sayadaw U Jhanenyya. These are essentially the same as watching and observing, or keeping the object in mind (vitakka) together with investigation (vicāra). Both terms are used by Mogok Sayadaw in his Dhamma talks.**]**

When samādhi is strong, a yogi is able to note phenomena in detail. For example, when noting the rising and falling of the abdomen, there are many aspects that can be noted. Between the beginning, middle, and ending of the falling movement, there are phenomena that arise and cease. Things exist between the beginning, middle, and end of the falling of the abdomen, and these can be known through careful attention.

[Here, Sayadaw encourages yogis to study different teachers' talks and instructions, and to apply them according to one's own character, verifying the practice through direct personal experience. Therefore, one should not adopt a sectarian view**.]**

Practice in Formal Meditation and Daily Life

There are **two aspects of practice**:

1. **Formal practice**, undertaken full-time or during dedicated meditation periods
2. **Daily-life practice**, in which one maintains **proper attention** and the ability to **reflect wisely**

The primary cause of all skillful and unskillful states is attention.

- **Proper, right attention (yoniso manasikāra)** gives rise to skillful states
- **Improper, wrong attention (ayoniso manasikāra)** gives rise to unskillful states

(Thus, the entire practice—both in meditation and in daily activities—depends on how attention is applied.)

Dhamma Talk 8: The Process of the Four Satipaṭṭhānas

(Based on a talk given during a seven-day vipassanā retreat)

During the first three to four days, practice mainly involves extensive contemplation of the body (kāyānupassanā). With sustained noting, practitioners gradually arrive at the contemplation of feelings (vedanā). At this stage, painful feelings often become prominent. Severe pain may arise, and this is encountered both in sitting and walking meditation.

For beginner yogis, the pains encountered are often coarser, whereas experienced yogis are usually able to overcome them more effectively. After contemplation of feelings, yogis proceed to the contemplation of mind (cittānupassanā). This progression accords with what the Buddha taught and unfolds naturally through the practice—it is a process, not something to be forced.

After overcoming coarse painful feelings (dukkha-vedanā), yogis may encounter pleasant feelings (sukha-vedanā), including what are known as insight corruptions. Following this, neutral feeling (upekkhā-vedanā) arises and gradually becomes more refined.

At this point, however, hindrances may arise in the mind, often manifesting as restlessness. If the object of contemplation is not clear, contemplative knowledge weakens. This is part of the natural Dhamma process (niyāma).

Initially, why were the objects clear? Because with coarse material phenomena (rūpa), the mind itself is also coarse. As the cultivated mind becomes more refined, phenomena such as rising and falling are no longer perceived as clearly. Likewise, the objects of sitting and touching become refined to the point that touching is no longer distinct.

When clarity is lost, the contemplative mind becomes unclear with respect to the objects, and the yogi may feel dissatisfied with the practice. At that time, low spirits, restlessness, and discursive thinking may arise, sometimes accompanied by worry, such as: *“Did I do something wrong?”*

However, the practice is not deteriorating—it is developing. Yogis encounter experiences in accordance with their level of knowledge. For this reason, the Buddha taught contemplation of mind after contemplation of feelings.

This stage is neither easy nor difficult in itself; it depends on the individual. The real difficulty lies in not knowing the method, not following the instructions, or not applying sufficient effort.

On Effort, Perseverance, and Contemplation of Mind

For some practitioners who know the method and apply effort correctly, the practice is easy from the beginning to the end. For others, it appears difficult. This difference is not inherent in the Dhamma itself but arises from differences in the way of practice.

When worldlings encounter greed, anger, and delusion, they are often unable to face them directly and instead respond with struggle, perseverance mixed with aversion, or giving up. Therefore, it is essential to overcome all arising mental states through contemplation. People encounter *dukkha* because they are unable to contemplate with mindfulness (sati) and wisdom (paññā) so as to understand the nature of the mind.

It is very important to continually examine one’s own mind. The good or bad states of others are not one’s responsibility and should not be allowed to interfere with insight practice. Insight practice is the task of the mind itself. Therefore, contemplation of mind is crucial. When one knows that a mental state is unwholesome, one can abandon it. This process is like a detective following closely behind, observing and checking the mind moment by moment.

In the beginning, however, direct contemplation of mind is not appropriate. The reason is that the mind is subtle, refined, and deceptive, easily leading to imagination and conceptual proliferation.

Note on Method and Individual Differences

[Contemplation cannot be taken as a fixed rule; it depends on the individual and their character. Mogok Sayadaw often emphasized cittānupassanā, stating that for him it was effective in dispelling *diṭṭhi* and discerning *anicca*.

Venerable Ādiccaramsi (U Sun Lwin) once commented that, according to his experience, many yogis fail when practicing cittānupassanā, and that body contemplation is generally easier. On one occasion, he instructed a yogi to contemplate the body, but when no progress occurred, he changed the meditation object to the mind. After that, the yogi was able to continue successfully.

The commentarial tradition also suggests that those who contemplate the mind require strong **samādhi.]**

Proper Sequencing in Practice

First, one should thoroughly contemplate body and feeling. Only then does one arrive naturally at contemplation of the mind. When the mind follows its desires, it becomes coarse; therefore, one should not give it free rein. At the same time, suppressing the mind is also incorrect, as suppression creates further tension and reaction.

The Buddha’s Middle Way—neither indulgence nor suppression—is profound and invaluable.

During practice, if strong rapture (pīti) arises, it should not be controlled. Instead, one should contemplate the desire to control. One must not go against nature, which is anattā. Where suppression is present, reaction inevitably follows.

On the Arising of Elements and the Danger at the Time of Death

The elements (dhātu) that frequently arise within the aggregates (*khandha*) can, at the time of near death, overwhelm the mind and body. For example, the arising of the wind element may produce intense and uncontrollable movements of various kinds. These experiences should not be taken lightly. However, one should not be afraid. The Dhamma is not frightening you; rather, it is warning you.

Therefore, greater effort must be applied in practice. Unfortunately, most people are unaware of this danger or fail to remember it, continuing to perform all kinds of unwholesome actions rooted in ignorance and delusion. As a result, the four great elements frequently arise in an uncontrolled manner within the aggregates.

Some people may directly experience the oppressive nature of the elements at the time of dying. For example, excessive sweating, internal heat, or bodily bloating may arise. If such experiences occur during the dying process and one is unable to bear them due to ignorance or delusion, the result will be unfavorable. The future rebirth will be far worse than the present experience of dying *dukkha*.

Mogok Sayadaw clearly stated: “Do not fear the arising of lobha, dosa, and moha. What should be feared is not contemplating them.” When these defilements are contemplated, they arise only briefly. Over time, the defilements become thinner, and eventually they disappear.

Dhamma Talk 9: On Death (Maraṇānussati)

(Based on the story of the weaver girl)

Recollection of death is extremely important and highly effective for practice. It is a powerful meditation applicable to both mundane and supramundane development.

Among the four protective meditations, recollection of death is the one closest to truth. The others are recollection of the Buddha, *mettā bhāvanā*, and *asubha bhāvanā*. When recollection of death is practiced frequently and effectively, it reduces lobha, dosa, and moha, and quickly gives rise to a sense of wise urgency (saṃvega).

This urgency prevents the wasting of time and naturally inclines the mind toward insight practice. The Dhamma of the Buddha is not meant merely for intellectual understanding; it must be put into practice. The story of the weaver girl clearly supports this point.

The Fruits of Recollection of Death

This meditation develops the roots of non-greed, non-anger, and non-delusion, supporting a person in becoming firmly established in the three wholesome roots (tihetuka). It is also closely related to heedfulness (appamāda). Through this practice, one develops clear perception of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self with regard to all persons and beings, and strengthens discernment of anicca, dukkha, and anattā as they manifest in both mind and body reality (*paramattha-dhamma*).

The weaver girl received the Buddha’s teaching on death and practiced accordingly for three years. Over time, her spiritual faculties matured and her perfection for enlightenment ripened. It was like a lotus bud awaiting sunlight in order to open—free from the hindrances and fully prepared for the development of samādhi and paññā.

This story is truly remarkable and offers profound material for reflection and contemplation. Eventually, the weaver girl died accidentally at the hands of her father. Overcome with sorrow and lamentation, her father went to see the Buddha for consolation. After listening to the Buddha's teaching, he ordained as a monk and, not long afterward, attained arahantship. Through the connection with recollection of death, both father and daughter realized the Dhamma and brought dukkha to an end.

Dhammapada Verse 174

> *Blind are the people of this world; only a few see clearly. Just as only a few birds escape from a net, only a few go to the heaven (or to Nibbāna).*

Reflection: on Death and Dying

All living beings fear death, especially human beings. They seek many ways to protect their lives. Yet, despite their fear of pain and death, humans often inflict suffering on others, including animals, sometimes in extremely cruel and unthinkable ways (for example, the use of animal furs). Even worse, human beings inflict such harm upon their own species.

These realities are clearly visible in the twenty-first century, extending even to the international level. Wars and conflicts are more frequent than before, and violence has become increasingly bloody and extreme. (This reflects the profound dominance of ignorance, greed, and hatred in the human mind when death is neither understood nor contemplated wisely.)

Reflection: on Fear, Violence, and Recollection of Death

It is quite striking to observe that ordinary people, who themselves fear pain and death, often take great enjoyment or *taste (rasa)* in violence, as can be seen in various forms of media such as films and other entertainment. Such responses reveal a lack of love and compassion for those who suffer. This reflects an untrained mind, which naturally inclines toward unwholesome objects and activities.

For this reason, recollection of death (maraṇānussati) is of great importance. It trains the mind toward wholesome and skillful mental states, fostering restraint, compassion, and wisdom. Like many other Buddhist contemplations, recollection of death becomes effective only through frequent and sustained reflection.

To support this contemplation, one should study relevant canonical and commentarial sources. The Visuddhimagga contains an important section on death contemplation. Other valuable contemporary works include *Beyond Coping: A Study Guide on Aging, Illness, Death, and Separation* and *Undaunted: The Buddha's Teachings on Aging, Illness, Death, and the Deathless*, both by Ajahn Ṭhānissaro.

If we have opportunities to observe and reflect on aging, sickness, and dying, these can become powerful supports for insight. Documentary films addressing these themes may also be beneficial. Direct observation of autopsies, where appropriate, can be valuable not only for asubha-bhāvanā but also for deepening reflection on death itself. Such experiences can arouse strong saṃvega and reveal the essentially insubstantial nature of the physical body, which is so often misused as a basis for sensual pleasure, leading to the waste of our precious human life in foolish and unskillful pursuits.

All of the phenomena discussed above help turn the mind toward goodwill, love, and compassion for our fellow human beings, because we all share the same fundamental difficulties and sufferings. These reflections also remind us not to squander our time, but to engage in actions that are genuinely beneficial—for ourselves and for others—actions which results will accompany us into the future.

This human world is a rare and precious field of opportunity: a place to cultivate goodness, develop wisdom, and ultimately transcend dukkha.

Reflection: Guests

Sayadaw U Uttama (Sagaing) once gave an excellent Dhamma talk entitled "Things Which Are Like Guests." In this talk, he explained that there are three kinds of guests: human beings, feelings, and defilements.

This human world is like a guesthouse, and every human being who comes to this earth is merely a guest. When the time comes, everyone must leave this place and continue the saṃsāric journey. Whether one's future journey is good or bad depends on past kamma and, more importantly, on present actions. The present moment is the most crucial, for if we understand the law of kamma deeply, we will recognize the true value of this precious human life.

No one invited us to this human world as guests. We arrived here because of our past kamma—born empty-handed and naked. If we continue to live as before, engaging in foolish and unskillful actions, we merely harm ourselves and live without true value.

We come into this world as guests in order to discover the rare and noble treasures that are truly valuable for everyone. The treasure map already exists—it is found in the Maṅgala Sutta. If one has the wisdom and determination to follow this map seriously, without deviation, one will sooner or later discover these treasures. Otherwise, one will continue to wander as a guest through the thirty-one realms of existence, which are not our true homes, and never find lasting peace or happiness in any of them.

Every human being should clearly understand that we are only temporary guests, and that life is very short. We all share the same fundamental problems: aging, sickness, and death. Recognizing this, we should cultivate kindness, love, and compassion toward one another, and develop goodness in our lives.

When people harm one another out of greed, hatred, and delusion, suffering only increases. Such conflicts—whether between individuals or nations—ultimately harm oneself above all. Whatever good or bad results arise, the

responsibility lies solely with oneself. This is the fundamental truth of the law of kamma.

Therefore, as human beings living on this earth, we are entrusted with a duty, an opportunity, and a rare chance: to refrain from evil, to cultivate good, and to purify the mind.

We should always remember that we are merely guests, and use this reflection as a basis for wise contemplation and practice.

The Second Type of Guests: Feelings (Vedanā)

The second type of guests are feelings (vedanā). In many respects, they are even more influential than external guests such as other living beings. This is because our reactions to the external world are largely centered on feelings. These guests are constantly coming and going within the khandha guesthouse.

Understanding feelings and learning how to protect oneself from being dominated by them is extremely important. Otherwise, human beings suffer greatly by oppressing and torturing themselves through unwise reactions. We can clearly see the whole world burning in the fires of kilesa—greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*)—which are repeatedly invited and fueled by unexamined feelings, leading to countless problems and suffering.

Human beings easily become lost in pleasant feelings, react strongly against painful feelings, and are deluded by neutral feelings. As a result, individuals and societies encounter many forms of suffering. We especially crave pleasant feeling (sukha-vedanā) and magnify it excessively, while our perceptions deceive us. In reality, pleasant feelings are insignificant: they are impermanent, unstable, and fleeting. When we become attached to them, they give rise to a great deal of dukkha.

Pleasant feeling provides a certain gratification (assāda), but it also carries great danger (ādīnava). The gratification is small and short-lived, while the suffering that follows is substantial. For example, eating food, earning money, cooking, eating again, and cleaning up afterward—each activity offers brief

enjoyment, yet is surrounded by effort, dissatisfaction, and repetition. The pleasure exists only between two dangers.

Pleasant, painful, and neutral feelings work together to trap and torture those who become lost in them. A classic simile illustrates this clearly: a fish sees the bait (neutral feeling), the desire to eat arises (pleasant feeling), and being caught and killed by the fisherman follows (painful feeling).

In the same way, feelings exert powerful effects not only on individual human beings but also on the wider world. From environmental destruction and pollution to climate change, wars, and conflicts, we can see how unwise reactions to feelings collectively generate immense suffering.

Thus, feelings truly behave like guests—they arrive, stay briefly, and depart. If we mistake them for something permanent or worthy of clinging to, we become their victims. If, however, we learn to observe them with mindfulness and wisdom, without attachment or aversion, they lose their power to dominate the mind.

The Third Type of Guests: Defilements (Kilesa)

The third type of guests are the defilements (kilesa), and they are more dangerous than the other two. As the Buddha taught, *the mind is luminous, but it is defiled by incoming defilements*. These defilements enter the mind and obscure its natural clarity.

Therefore, our task is twofold: we must prevent defilements from entering, and if they have already arisen, we must remove them from the mind.

Defilements arise through unwise attention (ayoniso manasikāra). When we experience desirable objects without mindfulness (*sati*) and wise attention, craving (taṇhā) enters the mind. When we experience undesirable objects, aversion (dosa) arises. In contrast, when there is mindfulness and wise attention (yoniso manasikāra), defilements do not gain entry.

However, most human beings do not merely fail to prevent defilements; they actively invite them to stay in the “mind-house.” By leaving the six sense doors unguarded, the mind becomes constantly polluted. A clear example is the habitual

use of smartphones and continuous exposure to all kinds of media, which stimulate greed, aversion, and delusion throughout the day.

Regarding the first two types of guests—living beings and feelings—we must understand their nature and avoid mistaking them for a self or identity. We should not become lost in feelings, which carry far more danger than gratification, like *a drop of honey on the edge of a razor blade*. Through such understanding, we can let go of clinging to both animate and inanimate phenomena.

With defilements, however, mere understanding is not sufficient. We must actively prevent them from arising, and when they have already arisen, we must expel them from the mind. This is achieved through Satipaṭṭhāna meditation and bhāvanā (mental cultivation), which guard the sense doors, purify attention, and gradually weaken and uproot defilements.

(Only by treating defilements as dangerous guests—never welcoming them and firmly escorting them out—can the luminous nature of the mind be restored and sustained.)

A New Life

U Han Htay, Religious Department

*(This is an article written by a research officer, originally titled **"The King Couple I Knew"**.)*

Title: Translation: Selections from Suzuki Shosan; Author: King, Jocelyn B.; King, Winston L.; Source: The Eastern Buddhist=イースタン・ブディスト 1979

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In Memoriam: Winston L. King

Winston L. King was ninety-three when he died on February 15, 2000, at his home in Madison, Wisconsin. …, …, … …, …, …

…, …, …

Winston believed that the adherent of a particular faith is better able "to penetrate to the centrally important features of another religion" that might be opaque to the "nonreligionist." His analogical observation, "Being in love he will know how to understand something of another's being in the same situation" grew out of the deep mutual devotion between Winston and Jocelyn, his beloved wife of more than sixty-six years.

…, …, …

Donald K. Swearer
Swarthmore College
https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/5/article/3525

Saya U Pe Aung sent Dr. King and his wife, Jocelyn B. King, to Sayagyi U Ba Khin's meditation centre in September 1959. Our department assigned me and two other officers to accompany them. We did not need to take leave, as this was part of our official duty.

When I first heard that the Americans, Dr. King and his wife, had come for meditation, I assumed that they were interested in learning about Burmese customs and practices, perhaps merely as a cultural experience. I did not look down on this, but I did not give it much thought either.

Dr. King was a priest of the Congregational Christian sect. Apart from their academic research, I believed they would not truly appreciate meditation. As for myself, I accompanied them purely out of official responsibility and had little personal interest.

At that time, I only knew Sayagyi U Ba Khin as the Accountant General of Burma. I had never met him and knew nothing of his role as a meditation teacher. In 1953, my father once went to the Accountant General's Office for an official matter. It happened to be tea break time, and he did not see Sayagyi or his officers and clerks at their desks.

When my father asked a civil servant about this, he was told that during their free time they were meditating in the large shrine room above the office. This made a deep impression on my father and gave him great respect for Sayagyi. Even during short breaks of half an hour, Sayagyi encouraged meditation to calm the mind, bring peace, and guide his staff closer to the Dhamma through practice.

My father later told us about this, but at that time I still did not know about Sayagyi's meditation centre. I never thought of meeting him, nor did I make any effort to do so. It was only later, through my involvement with the American couple, that I finally met him.

Inya Myaing and the First Meetings with Sayagyi

The Ko-kine (Kokkine) area, Inya Myaing Hill, was a beautiful and very quiet place. It was there that I first met Sayagyi, who was around sixty years old at the time. He had a well-built body and appeared healthy.

Note: This area is particularly beautiful. Rangoon Arts and Sciences University and Inya Lake are located nearby, with many large trees and a very peaceful atmosphere. Wealthy families lived there in spacious compounds. Rangoon University, founded by the British in 1920, was surrounded by large trees and was a very pleasant place for study. At that time, it was regarded as one of the best universities in Southeast Asia, both in its buildings and surroundings.

Dr. and Mrs. King, my two companions, and I were each assigned a room. Sayagyi himself stayed in a small rest house and personally taught the yogis. At 10:00 a.m. he went to his office, returned to the centre at 5:00 p.m., and remained there until 10:00 a.m. the following morning.

At 7:00 p.m. he interviewed the yogis about their practice. Around 9:00 or 10:00 p.m., the day's practice concluded. In the morning, before leaving for his office, he taught all of us the correct way to practise.

Sayagyi was calm and straightforward. If he had something to say, he spoke openly. He held great reverence for the Triple Gem—the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. At that time, however, I still did not know very much about Sayagyi.

Our primary focus is on observing those two foreign yogis, whose questions to Sayagi were not about the Dharma itself, but rather about their own spiritual practice.) We felt uplifted seeing Dr. King and his wife practise respectfully and diligently. I was thinking myself, "What will happen to them? How will they change?"

Mrs. King Changed Her Life

On the third day, I heard Jocelyn King reporting to Sayagyi about her experiences of strong physical pain (dukkha). Dr. King had dissatisfaction with impermanence (*anicca*) and discussed this with Sayagi. All three of us practised in the usual way, without forcing ourselves.

By the fifth day, Jocelyn King's face became clear and bright. She no longer appeared dissatisfied as before. That evening, Sayagyi gave a Dhamma talk, and

after it ended, she bowed and touched Sayagyi's feet with her head as a gesture of deep respect.

She openly admitted, "I am becoming a true Buddhist from a Christian life." We were all surprised to hear this, because until that day she had never bowed to the Buddha image or to Sayagyi.

Dr. King was the same.

[In one of Sayagyi Goenka's essays about his life with U Ba Khin, he mentioned this point openly. In the beginning, he told Sayagyi frankly that he would not bow to the Buddha or to him, as most Burmese people did. Sayagyi replied that this was not important—only the practice mattered.**]**

Now, however, Dr. King's wife was bowing to the Buddha and to Sayagyi out of respect and gratitude. I felt glad, satisfied, and deeply uplifted.

I approached her and asked, "Why has your life changed so much in such a short time, and why have you abandoned the Christian view?" She answered me very clearly:

"I have truly discovered *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā* in my own body and mind. My doubts, wrong views, desires, and worries have been destroyed by the understanding of *anattā*. With this knowledge, my mind has become clear. I cannot express my gratitude to Sayagyi in words—that is why I bow to him by touching his feet. Through understanding the Dhamma, I now live peacefully."

As she spoke, I placed my hands together in añjali, showing reverence. Her face was filled with peace and calmness.

Mrs. King was no longer in a state of half-faith and half-doubt. Her expression showed that she had genuinely searched for the truth throughout her life—indeed, through many lives—and had finally found it. The deep satisfaction she experienced was clearly visible on her face.

In truth, we three Burmese companions had come with them while still holding half-faith and half-doubt. Because of this, we concealed our conceit as Buddhists and quietly tried our best to practise among ourselves.

Now, arriving at the final day, Dr. King said to Sayagyi, “I am satisfied with the nature of *dukkha*, but I still do not understand *anicca*, and I cannot accept it.”

I heard him say this. Sayagyi remained calm when Dr. King’s wife bowed to him, declaring that she had become a Buddhist. Now, when Dr. King expressed his difficulty in accepting *anicca*, Sayagyi again remained calm and unmoving. He answered Dr. King gently:

“Dr. King, you have already accepted the nature of *dukkha*, as you yourself have said.”

He continued:

“The particles (*kalāpas*) in the bodily aggregates (*khandhas*) are all atomic in nature. Wherever they arise, they also vanish. All atomic particles are constantly moving according to *anicca*. You need to contemplate more deeply the penetrating nature of impermanence. Try to practise again and come for the next retreat.”

Dr. King agreed and expressed his intention to participate in a future retreat, but in the end he did not return.

Up to that time, he did not abandon the Christian view. He later wrote two books, *Ten Thousand Miles Far Away* and *Searching for Nibbāna*. In these works, he described that he had understood only part of the Dhamma; much of it remained unclear and difficult for him.

The Couple Far Away from Thousands of Lives

Up to this day, his wife has openly declared in America her transformation into the Buddhist view and has continued spreading the Dhamma. She taught people according to Sayagyi’s way of practice. Every month, she wrote letters to U Ye Lin, editor of *Your Life* magazine (now associated with the U.S. Embassy), joyfully reporting her progress and successes.

As someone who had discovered the Dhamma, she never forgot it. She also wrote to me frequently, expressing that only the Buddha-Dhamma was capable of offering true peace and happiness.

I often thought about her as someone who continued to carry the torchlight of vipassanā, lit by Sayagyi, into America. She attained peaceful happiness (*santi-sukha*) and had truly brought the Dhamma into her heart. With this Dhamma-heart, she even dared—firmly yet compassionately—to stand in contrast to her husband's views.

She possessed far greater significance than those who are Buddhists in name only, through her merits and spiritual maturity.

Dr. King, however, was still many lifetimes away from his beloved wife. His faculty of wisdom had not yet matured and needed more time to ripen. He was unable to attend another meditation retreat and could not meet Sayagyi again in full, as Sayagyi U Ba Khin passed away in 1971.

I continue to pray for Dr. King who has already received the path of the Dhamma, and with his wife able to lead the Buddha-Dhamma onward to others.

Some Reflections

According to Mrs. King's article, *"My Lifetime Teacher,"* she practised *bhāvanā* under Sayagyi's guidance on three occasions—between July and September 1959. Her mind underwent a decisive transformation only during the third retreat.

According to U Han Htay's article, based on discussions between Dr. King and Sayagyi (including interviews concerning Dr. King's practice), Dr. King understood *dukkha* but not *anicca*. This raises an important question: did he truly discern *anicca* and *dukkha*?

I have my doubts. His experience of *dukkha* may have been limited to bodily pain alone. Without clearly discerning *anicca*—without genuine experiential understanding—it is difficult to let go of self-view. Like most people, one may continue to cling strongly to the notion of self.

Here the importance of the teaching of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) becomes evident.

This observation is not intended to criticise Dr. King, who remained a committed Christian. Even some well-known Buddhist scholars—such as Professor U Pe Maung Tin, the first Rector of Rangoon University in 1920, and Mrs. Rhys Davids—were also unable to fully appreciate the doctrine of *anattā*.

U Pe Maung Tin was a Christian who translated the *Visuddhimagga* into English. Even in his very old age, he still did not fully understand *anattā*. Eventually, he asked Mahāgandhāyon Sayadaw U Janakābhivaṃsa about it, and the Sayadaw explained the teaching to him. This incident is recorded in *"One Life, One Sāsanā,"* the biography of Mahāgandhāyon Sayadaw written by Venerable U Gosita.

Regarding Mrs. Rhys Davids' wrong view, most Western scholars are already aware of it. Self-view (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) is deeply rooted in the minds of living beings. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to abandon and let go of it. This attachment even had a strong influence on the Bodhisatta and some of his chief and great disciples in past lives, despite their high level of spiritual maturity and perfection. Many examples of this can be found in the suttas and Jātaka stories.

Here, I would like to refer to one notable Jātaka story: Jā 544, Mahānāradakassapa Jātaka, which contains many Dhamma points worthy of deep reflection.

Among the three universal characteristics, non-self (*anattā*) and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) are the most difficult to understand and appreciate. Thus, it is plausible that Dr. King understood *dukkha* but not *anicca*—a point that remains doubtful. Most human beings perceive *dukkha* as *sukha*, failing to recognize the pervasive chaos, problems, and suffering in the world. These phenomena can be clearly observed throughout human history.

There is no need to look far. The twenty-first century itself provides ample evidence—from the events of 2001 (the 9/11 incident) to the ongoing conflicts between Palestine and Israel in 2025. Human greed, hatred, and delusion have increased even more than before, because people regard themselves and the external world as permanent, stable, and as possessing lasting happiness and a permanent self.

According to my knowledge, the meditation system of Anāgāmi Sayā Thet—U Ba Khin's teacher—has been quite successful both in Burma and abroad. I have

even known a few Taiwanese practitioners who were students of Goenkaji and who developed solid meditation practice through this lineage.

Here, I would like to introduce a well-known Burmese monk who taught the Sayā Thet system through his writings, particularly in his widely respected book, *Ditthadhamma Vipassanā*.

Venerable Ñāṇa Cāgī U Tejalankara Sayadaw

This Sayadaw was Ñāṇa Cāgī U Tejalankara (1900–?), a Burmese monk whose life marked an important turning point in modern Vipassanā practice.

Time: 9:00 a.m., September 1938, Full Moon Day

Place: Bhi-lū Island, Gwan-the Village, Lower Burma

At that time, he was thirty-eight years old and serving as a village monk-teacher. Unexpectedly, he picked up a Dhamma book that belonged to an *upāsaka* who used to bring it to the monastery. The book was *Ditthadhamma Vipassanā*, written by disciples of Saya Thet.

As he read a few pages, his interest grew rapidly. He reflected:

> "This Dhamma is not written from book knowledge. It comes from direct experience and practice. It is deeply inspiring. I must try it."

Immediately, he put the book down and began practicing ānāpāna meditation. Because of his accumulated *pāramī*, in that single sitting he directly experienced the *taste of Dhamma*. He completely lost awareness of time, continuing to sit without even hearing the sound of the wooden drum calling for the meal.

After some time, his disciples came and informed him of the missed schedule.

From that day onward, for one full week he stopped formal teaching. Together with the monks and novices, he practiced ānāpāna meditation continuously. After this intensive week, he resumed teaching during the daytime while continuing meditation practice at night together with his students.

From 1938 to 1978, over a period of forty years, he established many meditation centres throughout Burma and trained more than six hundred thousand yogis.

It appears to me that Ñāṇa Cāgī Sayadaw never met Anāgāmi Sayā Thet, who passed away in 1945. At that time in Burma, it was considered taboo for a layperson to teach meditation to monks.

On Teachers, Lineages, and the Spread of Dittha-Dhamma Vipassanā

To this day, no female meditation teachers have emerged in Myanmar. In Thailand, however, there were already a few notable women practitioners before, and possibly continuing into the present era, such as Mae Chee Kaew (1901-1991), Naeb Mahāniranon (1897–1983) and Khun Ki Nanayon (1901–1978).

[We can find their names in K. Tiyavanīch's “Forest Recollection”: Naeb Mahāniranon and Ki (Kee) Nanayon.]

At the beginning of Saya Thet’s teaching, some monks strongly opposed him. However, he was able to overcome this resistance. In later years, not only laypeople but also monks came to him for meditation practice.

Ñāṇa Cāgī Sayadaw sometimes spoke humorously to his Dhamma listeners, saying:

> “If Saya Thet had not appeared, I myself would have become a ghost— a great kind of monastic ghost.”

The text *Dittha-Dhamma Vipassanā* became so popular that it was published seven times while Saya Thet was still alive. Regarding its practical content, the book included essential Dhamma principles drawn from Ledi Sayadaw’s teachings, methods from well-known Sayadaws, and Saya Thet’s own direct meditative experience. It was written in simple and clear language, making it suitable for people of all backgrounds.

Another Western teacher associated with U Ba Khin's tradition was John Coleman, who wrote about his spiritual journey in a book titled *The Quiet Mind*. Before this, he had worked for the CIA. While in Thailand, he practiced Vipassanā at Wat Mahādhāt, which taught the Mahāsi system.

After some time, however, he found that this method was not suitable for his temperament, and he continued his spiritual search elsewhere. He later came to Burma and practiced under Sayagyi U Ba Khin. During his first encounter, he did not experience significant progress, yet he maintained strong faith and perseverance.

He then continued searching and met two other teachers: Dr. Suzuki (Rinzai Zen) and Jiddu Krishnamurti (the Indian teacher). However, remaining with them involved many practical difficulties. Consequently, he returned again to Sayagyi U Ba Khin, and on this second attempt, he achieved success in his practice.

John Coleman thus made the right decision. Had he stayed with the other two teachers, his spiritual quest might not have borne fruit. This illustrates an important principle: each person must search for a teacher and a meditation system that is genuinely suitable for their own character and disposition.

Conclusion and Dedication

In conclusion, I would like to offer the following prayer:

May the living worlds of human beings, devas, and brahmā gods all establish faith and reverence in the true Dhamma of the Noble Lord Buddha, through the cultivation of the Noble Eightfold Path.

May all beings enjoy and dwell in the Nibbānic element.

The fires of greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha) are burning powerfully throughout the world. Truly, these three fires are exceedingly great.

May the Dhamma leading to Nibbāna shine forth brightly and endure for a long time.

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In Memoriam: Winston L. King

Winston L. King was ninety-three when he died on February 15, 2000, at his home in Madison, Wisconsin. Diagnosed with cancer over a year ago, he continued many of his usual activities--reading widely, maintaining a voluminous correspondence, visiting with friends, and walking daily. Winston was one of those remarkable scholar-teachers of an older generation who never ceased to develop new intellectual and research interests. With degrees from Asbury College (A.B., 1929), Andover Newton Theological Seminary (1936), and Harvard (S.T.M., 1938; Ph.D., 1940), his career included pastorates in New England (1930-1943, 1945-1949), Dean of the Chapel and professor of Grinnell College (1949-1963), professor of the history of religions atVanderbilt University (1964-1973), and after his retirement fromVanderbilt, an appointment as professor of philosophy at Colorado State University.

Winston's two-year appointment with the Ford Foundation as the advisor to the International Institute for Buddhistic Studies in Rangoon (Yangon), Burma (Myanmar), from 1958 to 1960 proved to be a major turning point in his life and established his reputation as a significant interpreter of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast [End Page vi] Asia. Three important monographs resulted from Winston's stay in Burma: Buddhism and Christianity: Some Bridges of

Understanding (1963), In the Hope of Nibbana: An Essay on Theravada Buddhist Ethics(1964), andAThousand Lives Away(1964). The last volume was the most widely regarded of the three, but each was at the forefront of later developments in the fields of Buddhist-Christian studies, Buddhist ethics, and modern studies in Southeast Buddhism.

Winston was already well grounded in a broad comparative study of religion, as demonstrated by his Introduction to Religion(Harper,1954), before his sojourn in Burma. In the first chapter of that textbook, he set forth an understanding of religion as "unity-in-diversity and diversity-in-unity" that informed his sensibilities as a historian of religions--especially Buddhism--throughout his life. He saw being a person of faith as an advantage rather than a disadvantage in the study of religion, anticipating his subsequent work in Buddhist-Christian studies.Winston believed that the adherent of a particular faith is better able "to penetrate to the centrally important features of another religion" that might be opaque to the "nonreligionist." His analogical observation, "Being in love he will know how to understand something of another's being in the same situation" grew out of the deep mutual devotion between Winston and Jocelyn, his beloved wife of more than sixty-six years.

Winston's special interest in Japanese Buddhism began to take shape in the latter part of his career with a Fulbright Lecturership in Kyoto in 1965-1966. Subsequently, he was to return to Japan to continue his study of Buddhism and Japanese language at sixty years of age. Several articles and two major monographs followed: Death Was His Koan: The Samurai-Zen of Suzuki Shosan(1986) and Zen and the Way of the Sword (1993).

Throughout his career, Winston maintained a strong interest in the practice of faith, giving both personal and scholarly attention to Buddhist meditation in particular. While he was in Burma, he spent ten days at the International Meditation Center founded by U Ba Khin. An account of his experience appeared in the Journal of Religion (1961). In Buddhism and Christianity, he compared Christian prayer and Buddhist meditation; later he was to compare Theravada and Zen meditational methods and goals (History of Religions, 1970) and explore the yogic methodological background to Buddhist insight meditation (Theravada Meditation: The Buddhist Transformation ofYoga, 1980).

Winston's empathetic approach to religious understanding, his scholarly breadth and productivity, and his humane, personal integrity set a standard to be emulated by those who follow him. We celebrate his life and his scholarship.

Donald K. Swearer
Swarthmore College
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