

A Summary: A Manual of the Excellent Man, Uttamapurisa Dīpanī

Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw, Aggamahāpaṇḍita, D.Litt.

Edited by Bhikkhu Pesala

This is a summary for my own use and for those who want to read an overview of the text. The original 115 pages of the book are here condensed to 10 pages. I used the corona isolation time for this purpose. I hope I managed to quote the main points. In each chapter a question from Maung Thaw is answered by the Mahāthera.

Thomas Bruhn

Editor's Preface (extract)

The Venerable Ledi Sayadaw was the “father” of insight meditation in Burma. Before he became famous, only a few monks practised insight meditation, and even fewer lay people. The Sayadaw's central theme is that no amount of academic learning will save one from rebirth in the lower realms, or in hell, if the pernicious wrong view of a belief in a permanent self, soul, or ego is not uprooted by the practice of insight meditation.

The Venerable Ledi Sayādaw's reply [to the request of Maung Thaw]

There is not much point in formal lectures; what is important is to acquire the eye of insight-knowledge.....So, I would ask you first to read it alone. Only if you have followed it, should you show it to others...When King Bimbisāra of Rājagaha sent a book on the Dhamma to King Pakkusāti of Taxila, he added a warning not to open it in front of others.

Ledi Sayādaw 2nd Waxing day of Kason, 1262 BE 29th April, 1900 CE

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa

I shall answer concisely the nine questions posed by Maung Thaw, Office Clerk of the Inspector of Schools, Mandalay, according to the canonical texts and commentaries, giving my conclusions on doctrinal points.

Chapter 1

In answer to the first question [of Maung Thaw], regarding the definition, nature, and significance of the perfections, there are these ten perfections:

“Dānaṃ sīlañ ca nekkhammaṃ paññā viriya khantīca saccādhīṭṭhāna mettā ca upekkhā pāramī dasa.”

1) Giving (dāna), 2) morality (sīla), 3) renunciation (nekkhamma), 4) wisdom (paññā), 5) energy (viriya), 6) patience (khanti), 7) truthfulness (sacca), 8) resolve (adhiṭṭhāna), 9) loving-kindness (mettā), 10) equanimity (upekkhā).

When you are doing some meritorious deed, do not let craving for future well-being enter your mind. So, Maung Thaw, you should remember that when you aspire for human existence it should be only to fulfil the perfections, which are required for enlightenment. However, don't ever let your wishes wander away to mundane attainments or well-being... [There are many] instances of the life stories of misdirected aspiration while doing a deed of merit. ...In the life story of Vidhura, the wise counsellor, we find that of four rich men who offered food to four recluses of supernormal attainments in jhānic powers, one became a Nāga and one a Garuda, one became a great king and one became Sakka (king

of the Tāvatiṃsa heaven). This is because the first two were given bad counsel from their respective teachers. So, one must take great care in choosing a mentor; bad counsel can bring bitter consequences for one's actions quite undeservedly.

Low, Medium, and Superior Grades of Merit

For each of the ten meritorious practices such as giving, morality, renunciation, etc., there can be three grades: low, medium, or superior. A deed undertaken out of desire for fame is low. One undertaken with desire for the fruits of merit is moderate. One undertaken with the clear understanding that it is the custom of the Noble Ones is superior. (Visuddhimagga).

Patience and equanimity are the mainstay for the other perfections. Only when one has established these two can one expect to fulfil the rest.

Regarding your [Maung Thaw's] particular interest in the aspiration to attain Buddhahood, this is a fairly wide subject. The detailed process of laying the foundation for the aspiration to, and the fulfilment of, Perfect Enlightenment is dealt with in the scriptures in fifteen catechisms. Only a brief account will be given here. For a wider knowledge on it, please see the Cariyāpiṭaka Commentary and the Sīlakkhandha Subcommentary.

There are three classes of enlightenment of a Noble Disciple: (i) an Ordinary Noble Disciple's, (ii) a Great Disciple's, and (iii) a Chief Disciple's. By fulfilling the first ten perfections for one aeon and a hundred thousand world cycles, one can attain the enlightenment of a Chief Disciple. By the Chief Disciples are meant the Buddha's two principal Noble Disciples like the Venerables Sāriputta and Moggallāna for Gotama Buddha. By fulfilling the same perfections for a hundred thousand world cycles, one can attain the enlightenment of a Great Disciple. By the Great Disciples are meant the distinguished Noble Ones, numbering eighty for Buddha Gotama. There is no mention of the duration for the maturity of an ordinary Noble Disciple.

Once, a frog was accidentally killed while listening with rapt attention to the mellifluous voice of the Buddha preaching. He was reborn as a deva from the merit of listening attentively to the Dhamma (even though he did not understand its meaning). Immediately, he came to pay homage to the Buddha, listened to his discourse, and gained stream-winning. In his next existence he became an Arahant. From this story we can see that there are just a few forms of existence in which a disciple's enlightenment is attained.

The Four Conditions [for a Bodhisatta aspiring to Buddhahood].

There are four further conditions (paccaya), also called the four stages of maturity (Buddhabhūmi), necessary to qualify as a bodhisatta: 1. ussāha — exceptional energy; 2. ummaṅga — a keen intellect; 3. avaṭṭhāna — steadfastness of purpose; 4. hitacariyā — compassion, loving-kindness for others, even outweighing one's own welfare.

The Four Root Causes [for a Bodhisatta aspiring to Buddhahood].

There are four root causes: 1) attainment of sufficient perfections (upanissayasampatti), 2) attainment of compassion (karuṇajjhāsayasampatti), 3) attainment of fortitude (avihaññasampatti), and 4) attainment of good friendship (kalyāṇamittasampatti).

The Natural Inclinations of a Bodhisatta.

1. inclination to non-greed — a Bodhisatta instinctively sees the danger in greed;
2. inclination to non-hated — a Bodhisatta instinctively sees the danger in hatred or anger;

3. inclination to non-delusion — a Bodhisatta instinctively sees the danger in delusion;
4. inclination to renunciation — a Bodhisatta instinctively sees the danger in sensuality;
5. inclination to seclusion — a Bodhisatta instinctively sees the danger in socializing;
6. inclination to escape from the cycle of rebirth — a Bodhisatta instinctively sees the danger in existence.

The four conditions, the four root causes, and the six inclinations are the factors for declaring the Noblest Aspiration and for taking up the higher perfections.

Chapter 2

Maung Thaw's second question relates to the following: 1. the definition, characteristics, and significance of the five aggregates. [materiality, feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness]

Seven Aspects of Materiality [*rūpa*] to be Perceived

1. The Four Primary Elements [hardness /softness = earth element; liquidity/cohesion = water element; hot/cold = fire element; motion = wind element].
2. The Five Sense Bases. The eye, ear, nose, and tongue are the sense bases through which the respective kinds of sense consciousness arise. Body sensitivity has for its basis the whole body externally and internally.
3. The Five Sense Objects.
4. The Material Qualities of Sex. The material quality of femininity, the material quality of masculinity.
5. Vitality. The vitality that gives a being its life, or the vitality of the kamma originated materiality that pervades the whole body.
6. The Material Base of Consciousness. The material base of consciousness or the mind is called the heart base. It is the source from which kind thoughts or unkind thoughts flow.
7. The Material Quality of Nutrition. The material quality that nourishes the whole body, which may be called the sustenance of the four primary elements, is the element of nutrition.

The truth of the origin of suffering is craving, which is manifested in desire and attachment to the body. How do desire and attachment cling to one's body? One believes, "This is my body; this is my hand, my leg, my head, my eye, and so on." Furthermore, when the eye sees something, one believes, "I see it." Likewise, one believes, "I hear it," "I smell it," "I taste it," or "I touch it." The cessation of craving, which is the origin of all suffering, is the escape from materiality. It is only when craving is present that new aggregates of materiality arise after one's death. If craving is extinguished right now, no fresh materiality will arise after death. This will then be the last death, for there is no materiality or no "body" to suffer another death. That is how one escapes from materiality. This should now be quite clear.

[The remaining aggregates are explained only in brief]:

Vedanā, feeling: "The escape from feeling. The means of escape is within you. The feelings that arise in you can never be dangerous if you are not captivated by them. When the craving for feeling ceases, the danger is simply not there at all. Detachment from the feelings as they arise is the escape from feeling."

Saññā, perception: “The text for the aggregate of perception does not differ much from that for the aggregate of feeling, in most places; one has only to substitute the word *saññā* for *vedanā*. The definition says: perception of a visual object, perception of sound, perception of smell, perception of taste, perception of touch, and perception of ideas.”

Saṅkhāra, mental formations: “*Rūpa-sañcetanā* means the volition behind the function of seeing visual forms. So, for the six mental formations associated with the six sense objects we have six volitions. The Buddha mentions volition in this context because it is the leading factor, though there are many other mental formations such as: contact (*phassa*), one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), attention (*manasikāra*), initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), energy (*virīya*), joy (*pīti*), will (*chanda*), greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), pride (*māna*), envy (*issā*), meanness (*macchariya*), worry (*kukkucca*), sloth (*thina*), torpor (*middha*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), confidence (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), moral shame (*hiri*), moral dread (*ottappa*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

Viññāna, consciousness: “You should reject personality view in the light of the truth. Do not let yourself be deluded by the wrong view that there is such a thing as a person, and that an “I” exists; that such and such are my concerns, such are my doings, etc. See the fact of psychophysical phenomena in everything within and around you. Try to visualize the interplay of psychophysical phenomena whenever any action takes place in you, from the slightest blinking to explosions of fury (if this ever happens!) If you are vigilant, you can perceive the amazing events that are just the incessant, conditioned occurrence of phenomena, quite independently of you or your wishes.” “All psychophysical phenomena change billions of times within a blink of the eyes. Yet we barely notice that whole period of one blink, for it seems so rapid to us. This body changes at a staggering rate beyond normal comprehension. This rapidly creates the illusion of continuity, an inborn notion strengthened by nature. If sustained right thinking can be focused on the arising and cessation of phenomena in and around you, you will come to understand the changeable nature of all phenomena.”

The satisfaction and danger in the four mental aggregate [are described in great detail after that by the Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw].

[The final advice is:] Try to understand the phenomenon of death. In spite of the inevitability of death, most people usually ignore it. You should meditate to realize the omnipresence of death. Try to visualize the ceaseless burning of the fire of death in all the four postures: standing, sitting, walking, and lying down. All the merits acquired in the past through giving, virtue, or meditation for calm, if they were aimed at prolonging existence, are futile.

Chapter 3

The Element of Deliverance.

Regarding your [Maung Thaw’s] request about the recollection of nibbāna, it is an exercise that properly belongs to the Noble Ones only, who have realized nibbāna and experienced its peace. So, it is not a relevant meditation practice for you, Maung Thaw. You have not realized nibbāna yourself and the peace of nibbāna is understood only on its realization.....

I will give a reply that should help you to think on the right lines.

In the endless round of rebirths there is never such a thing as a person or a self; there are only elements and their phenomena.

When right view arises and realizes the true nature of existence, supramundane insight knowledge extinguishes craving instantly. This extinction of craving is the element of deliverance. Distinguish

between death and deliverance. Death is the voracious fire that consumes all materiality and mentality. Deliverance is the coolness, the calm, the peace, that allays and quenches the fire of death. This element of deliverance is unique since it is not dependent on, or associated with, any other element for its existence.

The fear of death is universal. Such is the intensity of the fire of death. In the supramundane sphere, the Dhamma shines that is called the element of deliverance or release. Remember the radiant peace attained to by innumerable Buddhas, Solitary Buddhas, Chief Disciples, and Disciples. This is a brief attempt at describing nibbāna which defies description.

The True Peace of Nibbāna.

Regarding your query about how a person attaining nibbāna finds peace, the answer is that nibbāna is not found by any person. This is simply because nibbāna is, whereas a person or a self is not.

Only phenomena, and no being or soul exists.

The idea of the endless cycle of rebirth pertains only to mental and material phenomena that are subject to the process of arising and cessation, or momentary births and deaths. Don't let that lengthy process linger in your mind when you consider nibbāna. For nibbāna is real, whereas time is a concept. *Samsāra* is infinite, but nibbāna cannot be said to have any beginning at all. One is apt to get confused since nibbāna is the very antithesis of *samsāra*. *Samsāra* is an endless process that defies measurement. Nibbāna exists in the ultimate sense, whereas the existences of beings are always changing and do not remain for a moment. Do not think of nibbāna with any reference to the transient world.

Chapter 4

The fourth question [of Maung Thaw] asks about the way that would lead a blind worldling (*andhaputhujjana*) on to the level of a wise and virtuous ordinary person (*kalyāṇaputhujjana*). A *puthujjana* is an ordinary, unenlightened person as opposed to a Noble One or ariya.

Andha means blind, *kalyāṇa* means skilful or wise.

Two Types of Ordinary Person.

The Buddha, the kinsman of the sun, speaks of two types of ordinary person: the blind worldling and the wise and virtuous ordinary person." (Paṭisambhidāmagga Commentary). "One who has no scriptural learning, being without knowledge of the aggregates, the elements, the twelve sense bases, dependent origination, the foundations of mindfulness, etc., or the interpretation and discrimination thereof that can prevent the arising of personality view, is a blind worldling. (Mūlapaṇṇāsa Commentary).

The Wise and Virtuous Ordinary Person.

One who is learned regarding the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases, the eighteen elements, in the original Pāḷi, can interpret it correctly, and can discriminate each item by means of examples, illustrations, anecdotes, etc., and has therefore gained a thorough knowledge of those teachings is a wise and virtuous ordinary person.

Likewise, one who has gained a thorough knowledge of the twelve links in the chain of dependent origination, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of success, the five controlling faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the eight factors of

the Noble Path, is called a wise or virtuous ordinary person. Such knowledge is a characteristic of a virtuous ordinary person.

If the virtuous ordinary person can develop knowledge to the supramundane level by gaining insight he or she is bound to become a fully-fledged stream-winner. One can then advance in the attainment of the path knowledges until one becomes an Arahant. All these are possible right now.

Chapter 5

The fifth question [of Maung Thaw] is about: How to be Mindful While Doing a Meritorious Deed.

I shall now explain briefly how a single utterance of “*Buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi* (I go to the Buddha as my refuge),” is an act of merit that encompasses the Four Noble Truths, the three characteristics of existence, the fulfilment of the threefold training, and the cultivation of the ten perfections, done while one is mindful of dependent origination and the twenty-four conditional relations.

As soon as the recollection of the Buddha arises in your mind, the three basic evils of greed, hatred and delusion are destroyed, which is the truth of cessation, or momentary bliss. The five factors of the Noble Eightfold Path involved in impulsion, namely, right view, right thought, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, are mindfulness of the Noble Eightfold Path. This is how the Four Noble Truths are realized in a single utterance while recollecting the Buddha.

[The three characteristics of existence (*anicca, dukkha and anattā*) are explained at this point by the Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw.]

The Threefold Training. Of the threefold training, the volition that impels a person to utter the words, “*Buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*,” belongs to higher virtue because it is a virtuous act motivated by a conscious undertaking to abstain from the four kinds of immoral speech. That volition comprises right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration — the three factors of higher concentration. Right view and right thought in uttering the words constitute higher understanding.

The Ten Perfections. Understand the practice of the perfections in the manner of the Noble Eightfold Path discussed above.

[As to the twenty-four types of conditional relations, a reply is not given to Maung Thaw here.]

Chapter 6

The sixth request [of Maung Thaw] pertains to the Buddha’s victory over the five *māras*; the definition, characteristics and significance of the five *māras*; and the difference between the body of Prince Siddhattha, the bodhisatta, and that of the Buddha.

The five *māras*: 1. Māra Devaputta, the celestial villain of the sixth *deva-loka*, the “Tempter” and the embodiment of evil. 2. *Kilesas*, the ten defilements. 3. *Abhisāṅkhāra*, kamma or volitional action. 4. *Khandha*, continued existence. 5. *Maccu*, death.

The five *māras* defined: 1. Māra Devaputta: explained above. 2. *Kilesa*: The basic defilements are greed, hatred, and delusion. 3. *Abhisāṅkhāra*: The ten moral kammās and the ten immoral kammās. It also includes all volitional actions that are dependent on the cycle of rebirth such as giving, virtue, meditation, reverence, sharing one’s merits, rejoicing in the merits of others, etc. 4. *Khandha*: The five aggregates manifested in the existences as humans, devas, brahmās, etc. 5. *Maccu*: Death, the phenomenon of mortality.”

[Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw then explains to Maung Thaw how victory over these five Māras can be achieved.]

[Buddha's Victory over Māra Devaputta is given as example]. Mara mustered all his forces and attacked the bodhisatta. He roused storms that toppled mountain tops. He employed all his means of destruction but without success.The Buddha was alone then, since all the celestial beings had fled. So, the Buddha touched the earth to bear witness to the deeds of giving he had practised when he had poured the ceremonial water onto the earth. At that instant the great earth trembled and the skies rumbled, sending Māra and his impressive army helter-skelter. Then Māra accepted defeat and returned to his celestial abode. This, in brief, is the Buddha's victory over Māra Devaputta.

Chapter 7

The seventh question [of Maung Thaw]: I would like to know the method of taking refuge in the Three Gems.

How to Practise the Three Refuges: Taking refuge is of two kinds: by hearsay and by direct knowledge. Taking refuge through blind faith in the noble attributes of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, but without right view, is by hearsay. It is so called because the act of taking refuge is not complete in so far as the worshipper has not actually "seen" the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha; he has not perceived the teaching; he has not been in contact with the teaching. In common parlance, he has not got the message. Consider the Buddha's admonition to Vakkali, the bhikkhu who spent all his time in worshipful admiration of the Buddha, "Vakkali, he who does not see the Dhamma does not see me." That is why taking refuge in the Three Gems without empirical knowledge of the Dhamma, i.e. insight into the arising and passing away of phenomena, relies on hearsay only. It is not taking refuge with direct knowledge.

One understands suffering, its origin, its cessation and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the end of suffering. This, indeed, is a secure refuge, this is the supreme refuge. Taking refuge in this, one gains release from the cycle of existences. (Dhp. vv 191-192). These stanzas refer to taking refuge with direct knowledge.

Chapter 8

The eighth question [of Maung Thaw] deals with the fundamentals that govern the case of a non-Buddhist who becomes a Buddhist. What beliefs must one abandon to follow the Buddha's teaching?

One is called a Buddhist if one has the right view about one's volitional actions being one's own real possession that one cannot disown. More specifically, this understanding covers ten matters.

[A list of ten matters is given.]

In the world, any wrong view can be dispelled by a knowledge of dependent origination. One is liable to fall into a false view only due to lack of this knowledge. It is vital that Buddhists understand dependent origination and the significance of the factors contained in the discourse on it.

One is a true Buddhist however, only when one has realized the Four Noble Truths. Such a Noble One is a stream-winner.

Chapter 9

The ninth question: [Maung Thaw asks Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw] to provide a definitive stand that a Buddhist should take when confronted by non-Buddhists, i.e. what are the main aspects of the Buddha's teaching that a Buddhist needs to understand and practise.

The Four Noble Truths Need to be Understood.

Dependent Origination Needs to be Understood.

(Other meritorious deeds such as giving, keeping the precepts, meditation for concentration using devices (*kasinas*), meditation on the boundless states of loving-kindness, etc., are usually found in other religions.)

The firm stand that a Buddhist can take and thus meet any criticism in the present existence is the law of dependent origination. The main knowledge that is the safeguard against any other religion either here or hereafter, until one attains nibbāna, is that of the Four Noble Truths.

I shall now explain the law of dependent origination. Please commit the twelve links to memory: Ignorance (*avijjā*), mental formations (*saṅkhārā*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), psychophysical phenomena (*nāma-rūpa*), the six senses (*saḷāyatana*), contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), craving (*taṇhā*), attachment (*upādāna*), becoming (*bhava*), birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarā-maraṇa*).

[Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw now explains these 12 links in detail. I will take out his explanations about some of these links: consciousness (*viññāṇa*), psychophysical phenomena (*nāma rūpa*) and attachment (*upādāna*).]

The Relationship of the Aggregates Throughout Saṃsāra: The relationship between the material and mental aggregates may be summarized here. Regard the paths of the material and mental aggregates as belonging to separate courses in a given being, each taking its own path of development. In the endless round of rebirths, the material aggregate breaks up on the death of a being, but the mental aggregates never break up until the final passing away of an Arahant (*parinibbāna*). The material aggregate has no sense-faculties, nor can it think about or comprehend things, which are the functions of the mental aggregates. The mental aggregates do not have any form or substance, not even the tiniest atom, which is the property of the material aggregate.

At the breaking up of the existing material aggregate, the mental aggregates take rebirth with a fresh material aggregate elsewhere..... Consciousness of the mind-base can apprehend things unhindered by any physical barrier. Mental phenomena are therefore incomparably more powerful than material phenomena.

Regarding the banner of attachment there are four kinds: 1. sensual attachment (*kāmuṇupādāna*); 2. attachment to wrong view (*ditṭhupādāna*); 3. attachment to futile practices or rituals (*sīlabbatupādāna*); 4. attachment to personality view (*attāvādupādāna*).

[Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw now explains some difficult points in dependent origination.]:

The Buddha taught about ignorance and mental formations to show that there is no other Creator. He taught about birth to show that as long as craving and attachment are present, there is no end to the round of births.

In all the planes of existence, aging and death are the only real dangers. They are the only fires in the ultimate sense. All the activities of each living being are undertaken just to serve the fires of aging and death. Every existence ends in decay and death. (A proper presentation of this point should convince any non-Buddhist of these facts.)

For there are many so-called Buddhists who believe that all internal and external feelings, pleasant or unpleasant, are due to previous kamma alone. “It is as fate (*kamma*) would have it,” they would say, or “If luck is with us we may have something to eat,” or “It is bad kamma that caused this misfortune,” or “It is through good kamma alone that one prospers,” and so on. Such exclusive dependence upon the power and effect of past kamma is not correct. It is a form of wrong view called “*pubbekatahetu-ditṭhi*” or the belief that all is conditioned by past kamma.

... [S]ome Buddhists place all their faith in kamma to the exclusion of effort and prudence. This is the other extreme of wrong view called “*pubbekatahetu-ditṭhi*.” Those who hold the later wrong view maintain: “Whatever pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feeling one experiences is due to a previous cause.

The kamma that one has accumulated from the beginningless past is a unique mixture of good and bad. Skilful effort and prudence will be the dominant factors contributing to progress. One is doing oneself a disservice if one blames kamma for one’s failures in life; so too if one blames the lack of perfections for failing to acquire learning, merit, and insight in one’s religious life.

Ponder on this well.

[The next explanations of the Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw are about the Four Noble Truths. Instead of trying to make a summery with my own words I have here selected some passages, that I believe to be most important.]

If you ask someone, “Where will you be born after death?” the reply will probably be, “I don’t know; it depends on my kamma.” That is true. Nobody can aim at a certain future existence: it depends on one’s kamma. All have to resign themselves to their own kamma. It is just like withered leaves scattered in a strong wind — no one knows where they are going to fall.

From the most fleeting moment to world cycles or aeons, aging is at work without interruption. Underlying it is the ultimate destroyer — death, a more terrifying fire. Aging or decay is very powerful, so you need to understand it. When the five aggregates fall apart, what one has clung to as one’s own life perishes and goes. Whether one is a human being, a deva, or a brahmā, one possesses nothing. Rebirth may be as a lowly being such as a louse, a flea, a dog or a pig, an earthworm or a leech. For instance, on seeing a pig that had been a brahmā in a certain previous existence, the Buddha remarked thus: “When the roots of a tree are undamaged, but only the trunk is cut off, the tree flourishes again. Even so, when craving is not totally rooted out with its latent tendencies, this suffering of rebirth, death, etc., arises repeatedly.” (Dhp. v 338).

Ignorance is not something that needs to be cultivated. This veil of darkness has always been inherent in living beings. Knowledge, on the other hand, is something that has to be cultivated. This is possible only by following the Buddha’s teaching. This is an uphill task since it entails eradicating ignorance. Knowledge is the highway where aging and death are completely absent. It is the road taken by the Buddhas, Solitary Buddhas, and all the Arahants who have ever attained enlightenment. It is the road to deliverance.

According to the method taught by the Buddha in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the first sermon at the Deer Park, the four truths are shown in this order: the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path. Suffering is, as we have seen, the real danger and ill in all forms of existence, which are nothing but the five aggregates. The origin of suffering is nothing but craving.

Chapter 10

An Exhortation Regarding Great Opportunities [selected quotations only].

1. The Great Opportunity of Human Rebirth: It should....be understood that by “a great opportunity” the Buddha did not mean an opportunity to enjoy pleasure, but one for doing skilful actions or meritorious deeds.
2. The Great Opportunity of Meeting the Buddha: However, the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment are known only when the Buddha’s teaching is still extant. That is why encountering a Buddha, or to be living while a Buddha’s teaching is still extant, is the greatest of opportunities.
3. The Great Opportunity of Becoming a Bhikkhu: The Buddha’s teaching is a great opportunity for devas and brahmās to gain benefit. Hardly one human being among ten million celestial beings would have benefited, not one among ten thousand of them is a bhikkhu, the overwhelming majority are lay people. During the Buddha’s lifetime, the city of Sāvattihī boasted millions of Noble Ones. Among them hardly a hundred thousand might have been bhikkhus.
4. The Great Opportunity of Having Confidence: The Noble Ones, who have won attainments in the path knowledges, are endowed with a confidence that is a great attainment (*adhigama*). They have an abiding confidence in the Three Gems, the upkeep of the five precepts, the performance of the ten kinds of meritorious deeds, and the practice of the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment.
5. The Great Opportunity of Hearing the Dhamma: The teaching has three main aspects: training for higher virtue, training for higher concentration, and training for higher knowledge or wisdom, as we have seen above. These are referred to in the Commentary as learning (*pariyatti*), practice (*paṭipatti*), and realization (*paṭivedha*).

Thus, should you ponder, Maung Thaw.

End of the Uttamapurisa Dīpanī

1262 B.E. the First Waxing Day of Kason 28th April, 1900 CE”