

A Suggestion for Lesson Material

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Abstract

I wish to address and suggest suitable lesson materials for school and university to provide an easier understanding of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha for the young generation. I will use one of the many works of the Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw. The Mahāthera is believed to have revived paṭipatti (practice) and pariyatti (theory) in Burma. They were almost lost in his lifetime. The Mahāthera explained 37 factors in his Bodhipakkhiyadīpanī as the requisites for Awakening. The famous commentator Buddhaghosa wrote in his Visuddhimagga (when he stayed in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka) about these 37 factors as “partaking in Enlightenment.” The Bodhipakkhiyadīpanī was first published in English language in the year 1960 and has 54 pages. This edition is in my hand, but is not easy to read for the beginner. I condensed this text to 8 pages. It is hoped that in this way it might be good lesson material for the teachers.

Keywords: Buddhist education, lesson material, Sāsana

Full paper

Bodhipakkhiyādhammādīpanī

The Manual of the factors leading to Enlightenment

Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw, written in 1904

Introduction

In the Puggala Paññatti of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka and in the Aṅguttara-Nikāya of the Sutta Piṭaka it is stated that four classes of beings who encounter the Sāsana, the Teaching of the Buddha, can be distinguished:

1. Ugghāṭitaññu (can be also a Deva or a Brahma)
2. Vipañcitaññu (can be also Deva or a Brahma)
3. Neyya
4. Padaparama

An Ugghāṭitaññu is an individual who encounters a Buddha in person and who can attain the Paths and the Fruits through the mere hearing of a short concise discourse. A Vipañcitaññu is an individual who can attain the Paths and the Fruits when the short discourse is expounded to him at some length.

A Neyya is an individual who is one for whom it is necessary to study and take careful note of the sermon and the exposition, and then to practice the provisions contained therein for days, months, and years, in order that he may attain the Paths and the Fruits. His success depends on the pāramis (Perfections) which have been previously acquired and the kilesas (defilements).

A Padaparama is an individual who, though he encounters a Buddha Sāsana, and though he puts forth the utmost possible effort in both the study and practice of the Dhamma, cannot attain the Paths and the Fruits within this lifetime. All that he can do is to accumulate good habits and potentials.

The Neyya individual

Of these two classes of individuals, an individual of the Neyya class **can** become a Stream Winner in this present life, only (!!) if he faithfully practices the 37 Bodhipakkhiyādharmā.

King Ajātasattu failed to obtain release because he had committed parricide. He had enough pārami to become a Stream Winner but lost his opportunity.

“The millionaire Mahādhana's son indulged himself so excessively in sensual pleasures during his youth that he was unable to attain tranquility of mind when he grew older.... Thus, although he possessed pārami ripe enough to make his present life his last existence... he failed to obtain release from worldly ills in his present life.... because of the upheavals caused by the defilements within him in this existence ...he would not be able to rise again and emerge out of the apāya lokas in time for the future Metteyya Buddha... Far away is this millionaire's son now from release from worldly ills even though he possessed pārami.”¹

Padaparama individual

An individual of the Padaparama class **can** attain release **within the present Buddha Sāsana** after rebirth in the deva planes **in his next existence, if** he can faithfully practice these 37 Bodhipakkhiyādharmā in his present existence.

Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw objects the general opinion current at his time (and maybe now) that if the pāramis are complete that one's release from worldly ills is ensured. As seen from the above examples it is also possible to miss the chance.

We are now within the five thousand years of the present Buddha Sāsana. The Padaparama class of individuals must utilize the opportunity to accumulate as much pārami as they can within this lifetime.

The seeds of samādhi (concentration) and the seeds of paññā should be obtained.

Insight into the three characteristics of existence (ti-lakkhana), namely anicca (impermanence), dukkha (suffering), anattā (impersonality) is necessary.

The seeds of sīla and samādhi can be obtained at will at any time. But the seeds of paññā can be obtained only when one encounters a Buddha. Sāsana. Sīla and Samādhi constitute carana (conduct). Paññā constitutes vijjā (knowledge). The essential point is: only when one is endowed with the seeds of both vijjā and carana can one obtain release from worldly ills in one's next existence.

For those persons who look forward to meeting the next Buddha Sāsana, Dāna, Sīla and the seven Saddhammas are the essentials.

Saddhamma means: Saddhā (faith), Satī (mindfulness), Hiri (moral shame), Ottappa (moral dread), Bāhusacca (great learning), Vīriya (energy, effort) and Paññā (wisdom).

Since the work in the case of those who depend on and await the next Buddha consists of no more than acquiring accumulation of pāramis, it is not strictly necessary for them to adhere to the order of the stages of practice of sīla, samādhi and pannā. They should strive to accumulate the largest amount of sīla, samādhi, and pannā, that lies in their power. Even in the case of hunters and fishermen, it should **not** be said that they should **not** practice samādhi and paññā unless they give up their livelihood.

¹ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw; 1960, p. 3ff

Other wrong teachings likely to cause obstruction to Dhamma (dhammantarāya) were also prominent during the lifetime of Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw (and today too), namely:

The inability to see the dangers of samsāra.

The belief that these are times when the Paths and the Fruits can no longer be attained.

The tendency to defer effort until the pāramis ripen.

Even though it does not reach the ultimate, no kusala kamma (wholesome volitional action) is ever rendered futile. If no effort is made, the opportunity to acquire pāramis is lost.

The rare opportunity of rebirth as a human being can be made worthwhile by putting forth effort in this life to close the gates of the four lower worlds (apāya).

Now follow the actual 37 Bodhipakkhiyādhammas:

They should be practiced with energy and determination and thus make worthwhile the rare opportunity of rebirth as a human being within the present Buddha Sāsana.

The 37 Bodhipakkhiyādhammas consist of seven groups, namely:

Satipatthāna, foundations of mindfulness (4 factors) + Sammappadhāna, right efforts (4 factors) + Iddhipāda, bases of success (4 factors) + Indriya, controlling faculties (5 factors) + Bala, mental powers (5 factors) + Bojjhaṅga, factors of enlightenment (7 factors) + Maggaṅga, Path factors (8 factors).

Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw explains them one by one as follows:

Satipatthāna, Foundations of Mindfulness (4 factors)

- a) Kāyānupassanā-Satipaṭṭhāna (Contemplation of the body as a Foundation of Mindfulness).
- b) Vedanānupassanā-Satipaṭṭhāna (Contemplation of Feelings as a Foundation of Mindfulness).
- c) Cittānupassanā-Satipaṭṭhāna (Contemplation of the Mind as a Foundation of Mindfulness).
- d) Dhammānupassanā-Satipaṭṭhāna (Contempl. of Mind-objects as Foundation of Mindfulness).

Of these four, if mindfulness or attention is firmly established on one part of the body - such as on outbreath and inbreath - the attention can be firmly established on all things. ²

The Four Right Efforts (Sammappadhāna)

At the present day, there is a great need for such kind of sammappadhāna effort.

It happens that those who put forth the effort (laypersons) have not sufficient foundations in the pariyatti (Learning of the Doctrine). Those who possess sufficient pariyatti (Bhikkhus) live involved in obstacles such as discussing the Dhamma, delivering sermons and discourses and writing books on the Dhamma.

² For the method of practicing out-breathing and inbreathing, see: Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaws Anāpāna dīpanī

There are four kinds of sammappadhāna namely:

1. Effort to overcome or reject evil unwholesome acts that have arisen.
2. Effort to avoid the arising of unwholesome acts that have not yet arisen;
3. Effort to arouse the arising of wholesome acts that have not yet arisen;
4. Effort to increase and to perpetuate the wholesome acts that have arisen

Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw does not agree with persons who say that when their pāramis become mature and the time becomes ripe for them to attain release from worldly ills, they can easily obtain that release and because of this they **cannot** put forth effort **now**. These persons do not appear to remember that the suffering occasioned by thirty years effort is not as bad as the suffering caused by just three hours in the hell regions. In the case of those who do not put forth the effort, they will miss the opportunity of release even though they are mature enough to obtain release through thirty years effort. For lack of effort, they have nothing to gain and everything to lose.

About past and present and future akusala kammās

past and **present akusala** kammās:

These are unwholesome volitional actions committed in the series of past world-cycles. In case they did not already produce results rebirth up till now, they await the opportunity of rebirth in the apāya-lokas. There is no case of past kamma expending itself without producing due resultants. These past kammās await a favorable opportunity for producing rebirth resultants.

future akusala kammās

Beginning with the next instant in this life, all the new evil and unwholesome acts that one commits are future akusala kamma. All these akusala kammās have their origin in personality belief. In the great whirlpool of saṃsāra, these beings are purely creatures who drift or sink. They must cultivate the desire for encountering a Buddha Sāsana, which is an extremely difficult achievement.

Viśākhā and Anāthapindika are beings who have obtained release from the state of sinking and drifting in the great whirlpool of saṃsāra (round of rebirths) from the moment personality belief (sakkāya-ditthi) was uprooted.

About **past** and **present** and future **kusala** kammās

It may be said that there are three kinds of fire in a match-box. The first is the fire that lies latent in the whole box of matches. This fire that lies latent in the box of matches does not burst into flame. The fire that is latent in the box of matches resembles the wrong view that resides in the personalities of beings during the unfathomable aeons of existence. The second is the fire that ignites the match stick when it is struck. This happens when the six sense doors begin to make themselves manifest in the mind-door through the function of volition. If they are further disturbed, they manifest themselves in the form of evil speech or evil acts. (The fire of the match box is active externally).

To destroy these three planes of ditthi completely, men must put forth effort in the three sikkhās (Trainings) of sīla (Morality), samādhi (Concentration), and paññā (Wisdom).

Morality (sīla) destroys the plane of transgression. Concentration (samādhi) destroys wrong view on the plane of mental involvement. Wisdom (paññā) means that if insight is obtained into the entire personality as a mere grouping of mental and bodily processes (nāma and rūpa) and as a

grouping that is impermanent, painful and without a self. Then the latent store of wrong view will disappear.

There are two kinds of morality (*sīla*): mundane (*lokiya*) and supramundane (*lokuttara*). Concentration (*samādhi*) is also of two kinds, mundane and supramundane. Right concentration having Nibbāna as object is called supramundane concentration (*lokuttara*). Wisdom (*paññā*) is likewise of these two kinds, mundane (*lokiya*) and supramundane (*lokuttara*). The opportunity of ridding oneself completely of arisen kamma obtains one only when one encounters a Buddha Sāsana.

The work of Anattā-bhāvanā consists first of fulfilling purification of morality (*sīla-visuddhi*), then of setting up body contemplation (*kāyagatā-sati*), and after tranquillizing and controlling one's madly tempestuous and unstable mind, of putting forth effort in the work of *samātha* and *vipassanā* (tranquillity and insight meditation).

Hence, those laymen and Bhikkhus who have encountered a Buddha-Sāsana in this life, who desire to rid themselves of evils in their future existences should apply energy with right efforts (*sammappadhāna*) to destroy the personality belief.

The four iddhipādās, Bases of Success

iddhi means the fact of having succeeded, completed, perfected.

So, we first we must understand about *iddhi*. In the Buddha Sāsana there are five „*iddhis*.” They are: a thorough knowledge of *nāma* and *rupa* (material and mental phenomena), the completion of acquiring full understanding of the Noble Truth of Suffering, the completion of the task destroying the kilesas (defilements), the completion of the task of realizing the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering and the development of the three *sikkhās* (trainings) for the attainment of the Cessation of Suffering.

Now we can understand the four *iddhipādās*, that are connected to these five „*iddhis*“.

They are:

Chanda. By chanda is meant the zeal or the desire to obtain, desire to attain, desire to reach, desire to fulfil, desire to accomplish.

Vīriya (effort). A person with this *vīriya* is infused with the thought that the aim can be attained by energy and effort.

Citta (lit.: consciousness). Citta means here great absorption. One attains satisfaction and tranquility only when one's mind is absorbed in matters connected with the task ahead.

Vīmaṃsā or *paññā* (investigation). It means the knowledge or wisdom that can clearly perceive e.g. the sufferings the rounds of rebirths.

In the cases of those persons who do not possess any of the *iddhipādā* they should attempt to acquire one or other of these bases.

“Hence did the Buddha say: Chandiddhipādā bhāveti, Vīriyiddhipādā bhāveti, Cittiddhipādā bhāveti, Vimamsiddhipādā bhāveti. One should put forth effort to develop chanda, one should put forth effort to develop *vīriya*, one should put forth effort to develop citta, and one should put forth effort to develop *vīmaṃsā* .”³

³ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw; 1960, p. 28; Ref. in: Samatta Sutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya.

The Five Controlling Faculties (Indriya)

Saddhindriya (faith). There are two kinds of saddhā, namely: ordinary faith and bhāvanā-saddhā, that is faith developed by meditation. The confidence that leads ordinary men and women to perform acts of Almsgiving (dāna), Morality (sīla) is called ordinary faith. Bhāvanā-saddhā however means the work of samatha and vipassanā. It needs for their proper performance the reliance on a teacher who is very learned in the Dhamma.

Vīriyindriya (energy, effort). In meditation quick success is obtained only by one endowed with mental energy. Thus, we achieve disappearance of sloth and laziness and the appearance of enthusiasm and vigor.

Satindriya (mindfulness). It means the setting up of mindful body contemplation (kāyagatā-sati), e.g. on out- and inbreath, and the development of bhāvanā-sati (meditative mindfulness) called satipaṭṭhāna.

Samādhindriya (concentration). The faculty of concentration dispels the distraction of mind when it is applied in the work of satipaṭṭhāna on an object as the mindfulness on breathing.

Paññindriya (wisdom). The faculty of wisdom dispels confusion and haziness. Where shall we look for Paññindriya? One should look for it in the Four Noble Truths. Among persons who encounter a Buddha Sāsana knowledge of the Four Noble Truths is of supreme value.

The Five Mental Powers (Bala)

They are the fivefold strength on which Bhikkhus and layfolk can place their reliance.

1. Saddhā (Faith). Developed faith has its genesis in the successful practice of body Contemplation (such as mindfulness on breathing), being pursued until the disappearance of the distractions and unsettled conditions of the mind. Hence, at the present day, some persons can emerge out of the realm of craving (Taṇhā) because of the strength of their power of faith (saddhā-bala).

2. Vīriya (Energy). Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw admonished the Saṅgha during his time. Although Bhikkhus were aware that they belong to that class of beings still possessed of personality belief, yet they take pleasure in the receipt of large gifts and benefits and they are unable to dispense the company of other people. These acts are comprised within the realm of laziness (kosajja). The Dhamma on the verge of disappearing at the present day Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw says. Some persons can emerge out of the realm of craving and laziness because they are strong in the powers of faith and energy.

3. Sati (Mindfulness). The antithesis of mindfulness (sati) is mutṭhasacca, confused mindfulness or absentmindedness. It means inability to become absorbed in the work of tranquility meditation, inability to concentrate and to control one's mind; the wandering of thoughts to objects other than the object of concentration.

4. Samādhi (Concentration). The antithesis of concentration (samādhi) is distraction of the mind (i.e. wandering thoughts and idle fancies). It is the inability to concentrate, to control the mind and keep its attention fixed on one object.

5. Paññā (Wisdom). The antithesis of wisdom Paññā is delusion (moha). It is ignorance, lack of clarity, mistiness, and absence of lucidity of mind. It is the darkness shrouding the mind.

Of the five powers, those of energy and wisdom are also Iddhipādas, as described before.

Sambojjhaṅga: The Seven Factors of Awakening

There are texts and stories wherein it is related that ailments and major diseases have been cured by the mere listening to the recitation of these seven factors of enlightenment. When these seven factors of enlightenment are acquired in a balanced manner, the meditator can rest assured that there will be no deficiency in his mindfulness directed to the body, no deficiency in his perception of impermanence and not-self (anicca and anattā), nor in his mental and bodily energy (vīriya).

These seven factors are:

1. Sati cetisika (mindfulness). It is a mental factor.
2. Dhammavicaya (investigation of the nature of reality). It means the process of repeatedly viewing the five aggregates (khandhas) in the light of vipassanā (insight knowledge).
3. Vīriya (energy, effort) means (as explained before) determination and effort.
4. Pīti (joy and happiness). It appears when the process of seeing and knowing the truth increases.
5. Passaddhi (tranquility). It means the process of becoming calm and tranquil in both body and mind.
6. Samādhi. It means a calm and one-pointed state of mind.
7. Upekkhā (equanimity). When the work becomes methodical and systematic, one is freed from much effort. This freedom is the mental factor of equipoise, the enlightenment factor of equanimity.

The Eight Path Factors (Magganga).

It is the Noble Eightfold Path (ariya atṭhaṅgika magga).

The Noble Eightfold Path leads to Arahatsip. It is as follows:

1. Right View (sammā-ditṭhi)
2. Right Thought (sammā-saṅkappa)
4. Right Action (sammā-kammanta)
3. Right Speech (sammā-vācā)
5. Right Livelihood (sammā-ājīva)
6. Right Effort (sammā-vāyāma)
7. Right Mindfulness (sammā-sati)
8. Right Concentration (sammā-samadhi)

The Path factors of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood constitute the perfection of virtue.

The Path factors of sammā-ditṭhi and sammā-saṅkappa constitute the paññā group.

The Path factors of sammā-vāyāma, sammā-sati and sammā-samadhi constitute the samadhi group.

As soon as beings reach the stage of Noble Ones by practicing this path, they transcend the state of Worldlings (puthujjana). They are no longer beings of the "world", the mundane, but have become beings of the supramundane (lokuttara). They are no longer committed to the sufferings of the round of rebirths (vaṭṭha dukkha), having become beings of Nibbāna.

The 37 Bodhipakkhiyādhammās are the heritage of the Buddha. They are the heritage of the Sāsana. They constitute gems of the Sāsana that are priceless and invaluable.

In addition:

We must know also that there are the four (resp. five) elements of pathavī, āpo, tejo and vāyo (earth, water, heat, wind) and ākāsa (space) in the human body.

Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw says that it must be clearly perceived that the causes for their appearance are four factors, namely: kamma, consciousness (citta), temperature (utu) and nutriment (āhāra).

The Heritage of the Sāsana

Those persons, who perceive in themselves the characteristics of impermanence (anicca) and not-self (anattā), are freed from the realm of personality belief. They become heirs of the Sāsana. The Dhamma heritage are the three trainings (sikkhā: sīla, samādhi, pannā) and the thirty-seven requisites of Enlightenment.

The Sāsana duration is 5000 years.

It is a big burden to preserve it since these are times of a waning kappa, says the Mahāthera.

Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw reminds us that even in the present world there are persons who have changed their faith from the Buddha Sāsana to other religions. This means that in the Samsāra worldlings have never been constant in the choice of a teacher in whom they have taken refuge.

If they desire to become heirs of dhamma either in this life or in the next life they should try to achieve perception of the three characteristics of existence (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*).

“There are many false teachers in the world. Ordinary people have taken refuge in these false teachers many times.”⁴

May the Buddha-Sāsana long endure! Cīram Tīthatu Saddhammo!

References:

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⁴ Saya U Chit Tin, 1988, p.74