

A Suggestion for Lesson Material. A Manual of the Excellent Man, Uttamapurisa Dīpanī, Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw, Aggamahāpaṇḍita, D.Litt

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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, when they were almost lost. The Ledi Dīpanī Propagation Society mentioned that the Sayadaw wished to widely distribute his dīpanīs, at home and abroad. The Sayadaw said that it was high time to propagate the teaching of the Buddha and have them translated into various languages. The first dīpanī was concluded in the year 1880, this dīpanī here in 1901. Before he became famous, only a few monks practiced 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 wrong view of a belief in a permanent self, soul, or ego is not uprooted by the practice of insight meditation. The Sayadaw wrote for those lay Buddhist, who were learned. The text is not easy to read for the beginner. That is why I condensed it to six pages. It is hoped that in this way it might be good lesson material for the teachers.

Chapter 1

The definition, nature, and significance of the ten perfections.

There are these ten perfections (and some possible translations from various sources): 1) giving, generosity, virtue in alms-giving (dāna). 2) morality, ethics, right conduct, virtue (sīla). 3) renunciation, abandonment (nekkhamma). 4) wisdom, understanding (paññā). 5) energy, great effort, vigor, perseverance (virīya). 6) patience, endurance, forbearance (khanti). 7) truthfulness, honesty (sacca). 8) resolution, determination (adhiṭṭhāna). 9) loving-kindness, goodwill, all-embracing love (mettā). 10) equanimity, mental equilibrium (upekkhā). “The ten perfections are ten qualities that we must develop in order to progress on the path of truth.”¹ “It should be noted that in the established Theravāda tradition the pāramīs are not regarded as a discipline peculiar to candidates for Buddhahood alone but as practices which must be fulfilled by all aspirants to enlightenment and deliverance, whether as Buddhas, paccekabuddhas, or disciples.”²

According to the Mahāthera there can be three grades to fulfill the pāramīs: low, medium, or superior. A deed undertaken out of desire for fame is low. One undertaken with the desire for the fruits of merit is moderate, one, undertaken with the clear understanding that this is the custom of the Noble Ones is superior. When one is doing some meritorious deed there should be no craving for one's future well-being. There is no mention of the duration for the maturity of the of pāramīs towards Arahantship for an ordinary disciple in the Buddhist texts. “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.”³ So, what has been the duration of the development of his

¹ Sayagyi U Chit Tin, The Perfections of Truth and Resolution, Heddington, 1987, Intro.

² A Treatise on the Paramis, Acariya Dhammapala, translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005, p 1

³ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw, A Manual of the Excellent Man, Uttamapurisa Dīpanī, North Dagon, no vintage, p 22

pāramīs? We do not know. “It may take 100 to 1000 World-cycles approximately for an Arahat”⁴

Chapter 2

The definition, characteristics, and significance of the five aggregates.

“The True Nature of Materiality: The four primary elements are the elements of extension, cohesion, heat and motion, the five sense-bases are the eye, the ear, the nose, taste and touch, the five sense-objects are visible form, sound, smell, taste and touch, the material qualities of sex are femininity and masculinity, the material quality of vitality, the material base of consciousness is the heart-base, the material quality of nutrition.”⁵

Vedanā, feeling: “The feelings that arise in you can never be dangerous if you are not enamored by them. When the craving for feeling ceases, the danger is simply not there at all. In short, detached attitude or nonattachment to the feelings from the feelings as they arise is the escape from feeling.”⁶

Saññā, perception: Perception of a visual object, perception of sound, perception of smell, perception of taste, perception of touch, and perception of ideas.

Saṅkhāra, mental formations: “The Buddha mentions volition (cetanā) 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)...”⁷

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.... Try to visualize the interplay of psychophysical phenomena whenever any action takes place in you.”⁸

“Try to understand the phenomenon of death. In spite of the inevitability of death, most people usually ignore it.”⁹

Chapter 3

The element of deliverance.

Sayadaw explains that in the endless round of rebirths there is no thing as a person or a self; there are only elements and their phenomena. When right view arises and we realize the true nature of existence, supramundane insight knowledge extinguishes craving instantly. This extinction of craving is the element of deliverance. He advises us to distinguish between death and deliverance. Death consumes all materiality and mentality in us. But deliverance is the coolness, the calm, the peace, that quenches the fire of death. The fear of death is universal. In the supramundane sphere the Dhamma will shine.

⁴ Dhamma texts by Sayagyi U Ba Khin, Heddington, 1991, p 68

⁵ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 44

⁶ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 66

⁷ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 70

⁸ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 87

⁹ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 113

About the true peace of nibbāna: “The idea of the endless cycle of rebirth pertains only to mental and material phenomena ...Do not let that lengthy process linger in your mind when you consider nibbāna. Nibbāna is real, whereas time is a concept.”¹⁰

Courses in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, who has been teaching according to the Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw, the request to be taught ānāpāna and vipassanā meditation is always connected with the aim of nibbāna.¹¹

Chapter 4

How a blind worldling can become a wise and virtuous person.

A puthujjana is an ordinary, unenlightened person as opposed to a Noble One or ariya.

One who is learned regarding the five aggregates, 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.

In the same way those who understand the 37 Bodhipakkhiyā dhamma¹² and the 12 Links of Paṭiccasamuppāda (dependent origination) is called a wise or **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 stream-winner. One can then advance in the attainment of the path knowledges until one becomes an Arahant.

All this is possible right now, says the Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw.

Chapter 5

How to be mindful while doing a meritorious deed.

Of the threefold training, the volition that makes a person to utter the words “Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi” belongs to higher virtue because it is a virtuous act motivated by a conscious undertaking to abstain from immoral thought, immoral speech, and immoral action. That volition comprises right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration - the three factors of higher concentration. By uttering this refuge right view and right thought as higher understanding will follow.

As soon as the recollection of the Buddha arises in the mind, the three basic evils of greed, hatred and delusion are destroyed. This is how the Four Noble Truths are realized in a single utterance while recollecting the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. The three characteristics of existence anicca, (changing, impermanent) dukkha (suffering, unsatisfactory) and anatta (non-self, non-soul) can be realized only if one has the knowledge of understanding the aggregates. But talking about Dhamma is not enough.

Merely saying the word *impermanent* is not insight, nor is it mental development.¹³

” If the lack of a self is not perceived, all talk of anattā is fruitless.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 121

¹¹ Nibānassa sacchi-karanatthāya me bhante: ānāpāna (vipassanā) kamaṭṭhānaṃ dehi.

¹² See: Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw Bodhipakkhiyādharmādīpanī

¹³ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 131

¹⁴ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 132

We must understand the Noble Eightfold Path in the same manner as the practice of the perfections discussed above.

After doing a meritorious deed usually in Myanmar the aim of nibbāna is mentioned. In this way mindfulness and meritorious deeds are closely connected. That is why in the Theravada countries after done a good deed, that constitutes merit, one wishes that this deed may lead to nibbāna.¹⁵

Chapter 6

About the Buddha's victory over the five māras.

The five māras are:

1. The māra Devaputta, the celestial villain of the sixth deva-loka, the "Tempter" and the embodiment of evil.
2. The kilesas - the basic defilements are greed, hatred and illusion.
3. Abhisañkhāra, kamma or volitional action. "The ten moral deeds and the ten immoral deeds. It also includes all volitional actions that are dependent on the cycle of rebirth..."¹⁶
4. "Khandha - continued existence, the five aggregates manifested in existences as human, devas, brahmās etc.
5. Maccu, Death, the phenomenon of mortality."¹⁷

Buddha's Victory over Māra Devaputta is given here 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 practiced when he had poured the ceremonial water onto the earth. At that instant the great earth trembled and the skies rumbled. Then Māra accepted defeat and returned to his celestial abode. This, in brief, is the Buddha's victory over Māra Devaputta.¹⁸

Chapter 7

The refuge in the Three Gems.

"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."¹⁹

"These hearsay worshippers may be Buddhist today, but they may change their religion tomorrow...those who worship with direct knowledge would rather give up their lives than to

¹⁵ Idam me puññaṃ Nibbānassa paccayo hotu

¹⁶ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 140

¹⁷ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 141

¹⁸ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 136

¹⁹ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 150

convert to another religion.”²⁰ This then is a secure refuge. This is the supreme refuge. Taking refuge in this way, one gains release from the cycle of existences.

Chapter 8

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.”²¹

“One is a real Buddhist, however, only when one has realized the Four Noble Truths. Such a Noble One is a stream-winner.”²²

Chapter 9

When Buddhist are confronted by non-Buddhists. What are the main aspects of the Buddha’s teaching that a Buddhist needs to understand and practice?

The Four Noble Truths need to be understood. Dependent Origination needs to be understood.

The Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw advises that twelve links need to be kept to memory: Ignorance (*avijjā*), mental volitional formations (*saṅkhārā*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), psychophysical phenomena, body and mind (*nāma-rūpa*), the six senses bases (*saḷāyatana*), contact, sense impression (*phassa*), feeling, sensation (*vedanā*), craving, desire (*taṇhā*), attachment, clinging (*upādāna*), becoming, existence (*bhava*), birth, rebirth (*jāti*), aging and death, decay (*jarā-maraṇa*).

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

One needs to remember that mental phenomena are incomparably more powerful than material phenomena.

Attachments are of four kinds: 1. sensual attachment 2. attachment to wrong view 3. attachment to futile practices or rituals 4. attachment to personality view.²³

“Certain teachers maintain that it is cold because God has willed the seasons...certain teachers say that there is no cause or condition for what a person experience... some say that pleasure or pain is the result of past kamma and nothing else”²⁴ These are all wrong views.

“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 must 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.”²⁵

²⁰ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 153

²¹ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 155

²² Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 157

²³ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 180

²⁴ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 191

²⁵ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 196

The Pali word kamma means ‘action’ and refers to any intentional mental, verbal, or bodily act. The Buddha says: ‘I say that intention (cetanā) is kamma, because having first intended one acts with body, speech or mind.’ Vipāka is a term for the ripening of kamma.

“As soon as the five aggregates fall apart, what one has clung to as one’s own life perishes and goes.” ²⁶

“This veil of darkness has always been inherent in living beings. Knowledge is something that must be cultivated. This is possible only by following the Buddha’s teaching.” ²⁷

“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.” ²⁸

Chapter 10

An Exhortation Regarding Great Opportunities.

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 skillful actions or meritorious deeds.” ²⁹

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.” ³⁰

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.” ³¹

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.... 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.” ³²

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).” ³³

²⁶ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 203

²⁷ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 205

²⁸ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 206

²⁹ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 207

³⁰ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 210

³¹ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 211

³² Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 214

³³ Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw p 218

Dated 1262 Burmese Era

The First Waxing of Kason (May 1901)

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