

Susan Hart
and
Sitagū Sayadaw

သီတာဂူအဓိဋ္ဌာန်

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Ashin Mahosadha Pandita
Sitagu Buddhist Vihara
Austin, Texas, USA

BE- 2551

ME- 1369

CE- 2008

Sayadaw Ashin Mahosadha Pandita

has written eight books in Burmese:

1. Experience and View of Life (5000 copies)
2. Morning Admonition of Ashin
Janakabhivamsa (4th edition)
3. Mahagandayon Sayadaw Ashin
Janakabhivamsa
4. Poems on the Beautiful Golden Son
5. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta
6. Memorial Letters
7. Commentary on the New Maghadeva
Lanka (Volume: 1)
8. Susan Hart and Sitagu Sayadaw

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Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa

Translator's Note

This is an attempt to translate the Dhamma discussion between the group of monks headed by Sitagu Sayadaw and the group of Young Americans Headed by Susan Hart in Austin Texas. Susan Hart made an appointment with the Sayadaw and the discussion took place in Austin, TX on July 12, 2000.

I am translating this dhamma talk for the benefit of my children and my grand children, and for other Burmese American Youths who are seeking to understand Buddhism while making a living in USA. I take full responsibility for any misinterpretation or inaccuracy in my translation. For questions in my translation please send email to santisukha@ttvmc.org.

I recommended anyone who has Dhamma questions to contact the venerable Sitagu sayadaws.

I respectfully submit this translation to Sayadaw Ashin Ariyadhamma, Sitagu Vihara, Austin, TX for editing.

Ashin Sukhasambodhi

Susan Hart

&

Sitagu Sayadaw Ashin Nyanissara

A book written by

Sayadaw Ashin Mahosadha Pandita

Translated by Ashin Sukhasambodhi

Edited by Ashin Ariyadhamma

- Q.1- *What do you call this building?
Is it Church? Or is it a Temple?*
- Q.2- *At this time what courses are given here?*
- Q.3- *Do Buddhist monks give services for lay people in wedding ceremonies, in divorces, and give blessings to the dead?*
- Q.4- *Is there a different school in Buddhism?*
- Q.5- *Please elaborate their differences.*
- Q.6- *How long ago such a division of Buddhist schools was occurred?*
- Q.7- *Do you find changes, and additions in Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism?*
- Q.8- *In your, Theravada Buddhism, how does the discipline differ? Can they take up the family life? Where do you get the money to build monasteries?*
- Q.9- *Even though there are divisions in Buddhism, is the fundamental of Buddha teaching the identical one?*
- Q.10- *Please elaborate on the Eight Fold Noble Paths.*
- Q.11- *How did Buddha attain this knowledge?
Is a God given knowledge?*
- Q.12- *In Buddhism do you have Deity? Are these Deity to be worshiped or are the Deity done something for the people?*
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- Q.15- *In Christianity, we can cleanse our sins through God forgiveness. What is the out look of Buddhist?*
- Q.16- *When one wishes to practice the foundation of mindfulness, do they have to practice in Church or in Temple? Where do they have to go?*
- Q.17- *Can you practice one day and go to Church another day?*
- Q.18- *In Buddhism, do you have punishment ?*
- Q.19- *Do you have creator in Buddhism?*
- Q.20- *In Buddhism when a person die what happened to him?*
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- Q.22- *Those who went to Hell and those who went to Nibbana can they come back to the human plane?*
- Q.23- *How does the Buddhist devote or lookup to Buddha?*
- Q.24- *We, the Christian have Bible. Does Buddhist have Bible that is a compilation of all of the Buddha teachings?*
- Q.25- *In this original Tipitakas, how many different kinds are there?*
- Q.26- *Is the Mahayana Tipitakas and Theravada Tipitikas are the same? Are they different?*
- Q.27- *Is the Buddhist entering the Nibbana the same as the Christian entering the Heaven?*
- Q.28- *Can you personally aware that you have attained Nibbana? What kind of wisdom or knowledge is needed to know that you attained Nibbana?*

Dhamma Discussions when suitable opportunity arises is a Blessing.

On July 12, 2000, four gentlemen and one lady headed by Susan Hart-all together six members arrived at the Sitagu Vihāra in Austin, Texas. They did make an appointment for this meeting with the Vihāra.

For the visitors to understand the Buddhist tradition and for the sake of showing respect to Buddhist monks (sons of Buddha) by the lay people, the Sitagu Sayadaw, U Mahosadha Pandita and U Osadhasara sat on the chairs and the six visitors were given seat on the carpeted floor. The Sitagu Sayadaw gave a welcoming kind words and explaining them that the monastery having a limited space cannot have room for extra chairs, and as in Buddhist tradition all lay people sit on the floor or if it is outside they sit on the ground showing respect to the monks. Therefore, please sit on the floor. All visitors happily took seat on the floor.

Sitagu Sayadaw : You may ask any questions you have in mind.

The visitors then asked the first question.

Guests: What (with hand pointing the building) do you call this building? Is it Church? Or is it a Temple?

Sitagu Sayadaw: It is not called a Church or it is called a Temple. Those who not informed about Buddhism called it a Buddhist Church. We do not call this a Buddhist Church. If some one called this a Buddhist Church, we cannot a theoretically accept it. It is because it is my understanding that "Church" is a place of worship for "God"/ "Christian God". It is a place to ask for forgiveness, to place to say prayers. It is also a place for wedding where they believe union under "God" is a lasting one. It is also a place for funeral where the dead body is given the last rights (forgiveness/blessings). Temple is also a place for God, and Goddess to reside and the people to pray and worship for favors.

Unlike the Church and Temple, the activities are different. This is neither a place of worship nor a place for wedding nor a place for funeral nor a place for worship of God and Goddess. In this place we have Classes on Buddhism, Dhamma lectures. It is a place for lay people, monks,

novices and nuns to take training in conducts, learning centers for Buddhist teachings (Tipitakas). It is a place for ordination and a place for young adults to enter into novices. In short, it can be called a Learning Centers and Training Centers.

Guests: At this time what courses are given here?

Sitagu Sayadaw: In this monastery, every Saturday we give lectures on Buddhism to Burmese (Myanmar) audience in Burmese. On Sundays, we are giving courses on fundamentals on Buddhism in English and mindfulness meditation methods in English.

Guests: Do Buddhist monks give services for lay people in wedding ceremonies, in divorces, and give blessings to the dead?

Sitagu Sayadaw: We, the Theravada Buddhist monks, did not conduct such services. However, if the brides and bridegroom after they become husband and wife, normally interested in giving alms food to monks as a sign of together they showed a good deed and for a good cause from

this day until death separating them apart. For the dead, the surviving spouses and children also give alms to the monks and the monks in return blessed them with chanting parittas (protective verses). The ceremony is concluded by everyone including the monks share merits with everyone in universe including the death person. We are neither responsible in union of man and woman (wedding) nor in divorces.

Guests: Is there a different school in Buddhist?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Yes, there are two major schools; namely, the Mahayana Buddhist School and Theravada Buddhist School.

Guests: Please elaborate their differences.

Sitagu Sayadaw: There are Buddha's lectures on Teachings and disciplines including Learning and Practice that were given when Buddha was living. All original the Teachings and Disciplines were protected, undistorted and followed by generations of Buddhist Elder Monks. It is known as the doctrines of Elders. Theravada Buddhist monks followed the foot steps of the Buddhist

Elder Monks. Theravada Buddhism dominated the South East Asian countries; Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka.

The Mahayana Buddhism migrated northwards from India into China, Tibet, Japan and Korea. The Mahayana Buddhism made many changes gradually and slowly in the original Buddha's disciplines, concepts and practices and replaces with the concepts and practices of new Mahayana Buddhist Masters.

Guests: How long ago such a division of Buddhist schools was occurred?

Sitagu Sayadaw: The Buddhasattha, the Prince Sidhattha was born in 623 BC. The Sidhattha was enlightened and become Buddha at the age of 35, a year 588 BC. Buddha died at the age of 80, a year 543 BC. There was no division in Buddhism within the 100 years after the death of Buddha. After 100 years, the liberal monks who advocate lenient disciplines, more freedom in the modern life took the discipline in their hands and made changes according to their needs. This starts the division in Buddhism.

Therefore, it can be said that the division in Buddhism starts approximately in a year 443 BC. At that period there were no Christianity, and Islam religion.

Everyone: Ah,.So Buddhism began at about 2500 years ago.

Sitagu Sayadaw: It is more than 2500 years. It is 2588 years ago. (2543 + 45=2588).

Sitagu Sayadaw: Do you have divisions in Christianity?

Guests: There are many divisions in Christianity. We have no idea when these divisions started. There are Roman Catholics, Baptist and Protestants, etc. There are more.

Sitagu Sayadaw: Tell me more about Protestant.

Guests: The Protestants are the religious group that changes the original teachings of Jesus Christ.

Sitagu Sayadaw: Yes. Mahayana Buddhism is like Protestant Christians.

Guests: Do you find changes, and additions in Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism?

Sitagu Sayadaw: In your Christian religion, don't you have the Old Testament and New Testament? What is the Old Testament? And what is the New Testament?

Guests: The Old Testament is the bible as taught by God before the Christ was born. The New Testament is the bible as taught by Jesus Christ and the Christian Masters.

Sitagu Sayadaw: Similarly, Theravada Buddhism has carried down earlier Buddha teachings and disciplines for more than the 2500 years ago. We practice according to the 2500 years old tradition without making any changes or additions. We maintained their originality.

The Mahayana traditions on the other hand, made gradual changes throughout the 2500 years depending on the place, regional Masters according to their interpretations and concepts. It can be said that it is like the Protestants, Roman Catholics religion, there are gradual changes

made to the original texts and practices. The Christian monks when moved to America, they are allowed to take up family life. In a similar way, the Mahayana monks when they reach Japan they are allowed to have wife and children.

Guests: In your, Theravada Buddhism, how does the discipline differ? Can they take up the family life? Where do you get the money to build monasteries?

Sitagu Sayadaw: All Theravada monks have a strict 227 Vinaya Rules. Although the Theravada countries differ in nationality and language, they all undertake to follow the same 227 Vinaya Rules. According to the Vinaya Rules the monks are forbidden to marry, they cannot take up the businesses as lay people, they are also forbid to participate in wedding ceremonies, and they are forbidden to charge money in funeral activities. All our food, shelter, robes and teachings of Buddhism are depended on the donations of Buddhists from Buddhist countries.

Guests: Even though there are divisions in Buddhism, is the fundamental of Buddha teaching the identical one?

Sitagu Sayadaw: It is similar to the Christianity. Even though there are divisions in Christianity, fundamentally all Christian believe in God, the teaching of Jesus Christ and has faith in the Bible. Also in Buddhism, even though there are divisions in Buddhism fundamentally all Buddhists have faith in Buddha as a teacher, all Buddhist believe in the Eight Fold Noble Paths, all believe in the Four Noble Truths and all believe that Nibbana is the ultimate goal to free from suffering (true liberation) for all Buddhist.

Guests: Please elaborate on the Eight Fold Noble Paths.

Sitagu Sayadaw: The Noble Path means the path, the road taken by the Noble persons. In other words it is the path or road that can take one to become Noble or Noble person. All Noble persons walk on this road. They practice the Eight Fold Noble Paths to become a Noble person or to become an enlightened person.

(1) First, it is the Right Understanding. It is the practice/examination/ cultivation to seek wisdom to see/to understand in its ultimate reality of

oneself, one's becoming, one's existing or one's task to perform

Today some of the people because do not understand their self have done many wrong doings. The people who are submerged in the very disgusting greedy life do not know their true vision of their own situation because of wrong understanding. The right understanding the single most important thing essential in each of us to think the right thing, to say the right thing and to do the right thing.

For example, please take a look at this piece of paper. You all look at this white rectangular shape paper. What did you see? If you said that I see a piece of paper, then you are not seeing the right one. If you look at with your eye you will see the white color and the rectangle shape. The rectangular shape is not the paper. If you called the rectangular shape a paper, then, what would you call any other rectangular shapes? In the same way, the white color is not the paper. If you called the white color a paper, then what would you call any white color? You smell the white rectangular shape piece. It has the smell.

If you chew, it also has the taste. It also may have some nutriment. If you feel it, it may have feeling of roughness, smoothness, the feeling of warmth and cold. All these properties are inherited in the piece of paper. Can you call all these properties as a piece of paper? In reality, the color is neither nor the smell is the paper.

According to the Buddha's Abhidhamma, it is very important that one must learn to see and understand the "as it is" on everything and/or any objects including this piece of paper that you just see.

Now, you all know my name as Nyanissara. Is the hair called Nyanissara? Is the eyebrow called Nyanissara? Is the skin called Nyanissara. Is the nail called Nyanissara? The Right Understanding is the knowing through rigorous analysis of this fathom long body that is the constitution of rupa dhammas and nâma dhamma.

The higher level of the Right Understanding is the knowledge of the Truth (The four truths). You can find the actual teaching of the true building blocks of human life only in Buddhism.

Therefore, in summary, the Right understanding is the wisdom of knowing how the human life was truly built with rhyme and reasons/cause and effect.

Guests: Please continue on to the next topic.

Sitagu Sayadaw: Yes. (2)The next topic is the Right Thinking/Intention. One can think right only if you know the fact/knowing the truth. If you did not know the truth, you cannot think right. If one knows the truth of where he stands in this life, selfish thought will not arise in him. He will not selfishly use all his possessions and belongings and instead he will share his wealth with others. Such an intension is the Right Thinking.

In addition, such a person has no intention of creating problems so that it destroyed others business. Instead, he would thought of better ways to give a helping hand so that others businesses grow and prosperous. The thought of loving-kindness is the Right Thinking.

One, who has the true understanding of his own life, will neither contemplate on giving troubles

to others nor make others miserable. He will be always looking for ways to help the troubled person, to save someone from conditions leading to his death. The thought of harmlessness is also called the Right Thinking.

Our teacher, the Buddha for 45 years and for day and night taught us all human beings how to come up with the Right Thinking and the Right Thought/Intention.

Guests: How did Buddha attain this knowledge?
Is a God given knowledge?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Buddha was a very strong, handsome, noble, and intelligent human being. He is not the son of one kind of God or the other. He is also not the agent of one kind of God or the other. He is not the reincarnation of one kind of God or the other. He is the super human being born of mother and father. The father is the King and the mother is the Queen. The parents, the King and the Queen, ask Bodhisatta to take over the throne and all their belongings. But, at the age of (29) he leaves the throne, the wife the only son and all properties

and went into the forest on the North-East part of India. He stayed in that forest for 6 years and submerged himself in intensive training and meditation.

He attained the highest knowledge by developing his own method independent of an outside instructions, developed the wisdom through intensive self training, cultivation and continuous practice in the forest. The knowledge was attained without the help of external God or without the help of another human being. The scenario is like the lotus bud that is buried under the mud and muddy waters slowly growing out of that mud and muddy waters. The lotus bud slowly grow up and climb up out to the top of muddy water and bloom exhibiting all its beauty. The growth of the rose bud is nothing to do with God creation. It is strength of natural growth process.

The man has mental formations that can be associated with the mind as the natural ability. The mental formations such as the morality, concentration and wisdom are part of the Eight Fold Noble Paths. The Bodhisatta tries to fulfill

them by intensively practicing not only 6 years in this life but in many previous rebirths for eons. When Bodhisatta reach the highest level of practice and training he was able to remove all the defilements. He discovered all the Truths without exception. Consequently, according to Buddhism, God is an imaginary idea that many people are worshipping. Since God is an imaginary idea, it can not produce actual knowledge.

Guests: In Buddhism do you have Deity? Are these Deity to be worshiped or are the Deity done something for the people?

Sitagu Sayadaw: In Buddhism there is no God that creates man. But, when man died he can be reborn as Deity. They are not to be worshiped. They exist as another being living in their abodes. They create anything to change the life of man in any way.

You all know that a sick person has to go Urgent Care, look at by the Physician, follow the doctor's instruction, takes the medication given by the doctor to be well. Now all of you are praying to God for forgiveness and salvation in hope that

your prayers are answered. In actuality, you should have asked for free from aging, free from diseases, and free from dying. If God answered all that you asked, it would be a blessing.

In Buddhism, we have morality, concentration and wisdom. It is like a good medication. There are volumes of book called Tipitakas that include the teachings of Buddha's. They are like the physicians instructions. Buddha can be look at as the physician specialist. Therefore, all Buddhist took the Tipitakas books as the prescription and studied intensively and take the morality, concentration and wisdom as the medication. Consequently, in Buddhism we believe and accepted that I myself is the one that can protect myself, the teaching of Buddha (Dhamma) is the one that I can trust and have faith in for my protection. The true Buddhist has no other outside protector for him to look for.

Guests: Do you have individuals who attain such knowledge by depending on Buddha's teaching?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Yes, we have. There are many. Buddha is the only one who attained the

knowledge without the help from any other person. All his disciples took Buddha as their teacher for guidance, followed Buddha's instruction and practice accordingly to attain the knowledge. Within the period of two thousand five hundred years there are uncountable number of disciples entered Nibbana.

Let us continue to the next one.

(3) The next one is Right Speech. It is a good practice to speak in a Right speech. All men should know how to speak properly. Buddha taught us precisely and accurately. One must always say the truth. Some times what you like to say is the truth, but it may not be the suitable situation to say it. One must wait for the proper time. Even when you want to say it, say it with pure intention and from the constructive point of view. One must not let his zealous mind influence the truth. When one is telling it, as it is, not rude or impolite. It must be polite. One must say it so that they can take your word easily. It is because you are presenting it politely, there cannot be a separation due to misunderstanding between the two. Your word should be able to

bring divided people together. Your word should be able to bring angry people to be able to shake hands. Your word must benefit other people and must do well for you. The people who are listening to kind words must accept it at any place and at any time. Therefore, Right Speech is telling the truth, simple speech, speaking politely, loving words, the words that benefit both people, the word that is not insulting to others, talking about the true facts, and the word that every one can accept.

The fourth one on the Noble Paths is the right action.

(4) Right action- The action here means anything you did physically. Every day when every one trying to carry on with their daily activities, it must make people miserable, and must avoid taking other's people life. You must also avoid taking what is not given and try to make sure that your actions not cause destruction of others properties. Also do not take pleasure in sexual misconduct. The three wrong doings are taking others life and thus making others miserable, taking what is not given, and sexual misconduct

and if one put restraints on the three wrong doings, the actions can be good actions and it can be a good behavior.

Guests: What kind of action constitutes sexual misconduct?

Without mutual consent the adult man and woman got married and they decided to have sex, then he or she has committed sexual misconduct. This is Buddhist definition of sexual misconduct.

Guests: It seems that the Noble Path is difficult to practice here in United States.

Sitagu Sayadaw: (5) Right Livelihood is not taking the life of others for ones livelihood; is not illegally take from others to promote your business, is not use your tongue to tell lies if you want to use your tongue to taste gourmet food, is not take the life of others using poisons, and guns in gaming sake, is not make a living by selling intoxicating things, is not buy and sell animals to abuse, is not make a living by buying and selling slaves and prostitutes. If you practice in

such a way, then your livelihood is considered a Right livelihood. You can proudly show the beauty of your clean living. This is the Right Livelihood.

Sitagu Sayadaw :(6)Right Effort or Right Endeavour does not mean that the effort use to give your family a good living. The Right Effort is trying to avoid the sin that has yet arisen, if you already have committed the sins, try not to repeat the same mistake, if you have not done the good deed of the day, try and see the opportunity to do good for others, if you have done the good deed, rejoice by reminiscence the good deed. This is the definition of Right Effort.

Guests: In Christianity, we can cleanse our sins through God forgiveness. What is the out look of Buddhist?

Sitagu Sayadaw: If you go to the rest room, and if accident happened. There is soap and water for you to clean it up. But, if you choose to ask God to cleanse your hand, we called him a bad, naughty boy. This is the answer.

Guests: What it means that you have to clean yourself ?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Yes, this is something that God is incapable of helping you. It will be better of to take the soap and water to clean it by your self. Buddhist teaching put more weight on the ability of man to change.

Sitagu Sayadaw: (7) the seventh Noble Path is the Right Mindfulness. It is sometimes translated as "awareness", "remembrance and sometimes as "Right Intension". In this knowing your family, remember your spouse, remember your lover, you make note of the one you dislike, and you do not forget the deceased member of your family do not constitute the Right mindfulness. The Right Mindfulness is to try to practice to control or to guard your mind.

It is to guard your mind not to indulge in sensual pleasure when you experience a like and desirable thing, and to guard your mind from arousing anger if you encounter something that you dislike. The ability to have control over your mind is the Right Mindfulness. Thus, to cultivate your

mind one must continuously guard and pay attention to the activity of body, of verbal speech and of your mind.

In other words, the Right Mindfulness like a rope that is to use to restrain the wild ox who like to wander uncontrollably, and also like a rope to control the monkey who like to jump from tree to tree branch to branch in the forest. Right mindfulness is therefore an ability to have control over your mind. If you took that in this life peace of mind is essential requirement then you must cultivate the Right Mindfulness. Buddha's teaching is unlike the any other religion that salvation is through faith, worshiping, asks for forgiveness and blessing to God. Instead Buddha taught us to train your mind and to take care of your self as the way of life.

Guests: When one wishes to practice the foundation of mindfulness, do they have to practice in Church or in Temple? Where do they have to go?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Buddha's teaching is the Universal Teaching. Anyone can take up the

practice at any place and at any time. It can be practice in Church, in monastery, and at home. The best place is a place conducive to quiet and tranquil place.

Guests: Can you practice one day and go to Church another day?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Yes, you are allowed to do both. There is no penalty or angry by Buddha for worshipping other God.

Guest: In Buddhism, do you have punishment ?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Unlike other religion where there is a punishment given by God. It is like you earn money for the length of time you work, if you are guilty for your won action is not the punishment given by God. Therefore, in Buddhism, the creator of your life is you yourself and the punishment you received is no other than your own fault.

Guests: Do you have creator in Buddhism?

Sitagu Sayadaw: There is no creator God in Buddhism. There is no creator God coming down from the sky. You are the creator of your own

life. The good people will have a good life and the dishonest people will end up with a miserable life. We are the creator of our own life.

Let us finish of the Eight Fold Noble Paths. The last one in the list is the Right Concentration.

(8) Right Concentration is the focus of the mind on the good object. Your mind and so is our minds are like clouds wondering in the sky. And it is like the monkey wondering in the forest. Our minds are jumping from the object of seeing to the object of hearing; and then to the object of smell, the smell of the food, the touch, and the thoughts that may arise randomly, and one after another. The God will not give you a hand to control the wondering mind. You have to apply the Right Effort and the Right Mindfulness in order for you to be able to control your mind.

You must tie down your monkey mind with the Right Mindfulness. You must cultivate your mind by using the club like Right Effort so that your mind settled on the good object. If you practice diligently you will develop a Right Concentration.

The discussion on the Right Concentration must include the Wrong Concentration. The concentration of the hunter hunting the deer or the bird has the concentration on the rifle and the focus on the prey. The fisherman put his concentration on the hook and the fish. Their concentration is so deep that they sit without moving like a stone. This is not the Right Concentration. The Right Concentration focuses on the good objects and therefore, the ill mentality cannot enter into the mind with Right Concentration.

The Right Concentrated mind is cleansed of the desire for sensual pleasure, cleansed of the dirty dishonest mind, and the mind is free from heavy and lazy mind, there is no anxiety or no scary mind, and there are no skeptical doubts in the mind. Instead, the Right Concentrated mind is peaceful, tranquil, happy and contented. When you experience such a quality of mind, you know that the happiness is far more than the happiness derived from position, power, wealth and sensual pleasure.

We just finish describing the Eight Fold Noble Paths. The Eight Fold Noble Paths can be summarized as the morality, concentration and wisdom. The following is how we do this summary:

The Right Speech, The Right Action and the Right Livelihood come under the title of Morality. The Right Effort, The Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration constitute the Concentration Group. The Right Understanding and the Right Thought become Wisdom Group. Buddha's dispensation is the teaching to practice or observe Morality, Concentration and Wisdom.

Morality is the discipline to restraint your action, and verbal speech that can lead you to become a good person. Concentration is a discipline to control your mind so that you become a righteous person. Wisdom is a method to cleanse your mind free from improper thoughts such as greed, hatred and delusion. This is the summary if Buddha's dispensation.

Guests: In Buddhism when a person die what happened to him?

Sitagu Sayadaw: In Buddhism, after the person died, he can either be reborn in many abodes or he may not be born at all. The reason that the person may reborn in different abodes is because there are persons who practice the Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom fully and some persons did not practice at all. Those persons who practice the Morality, Concentration and Wisdom fully at the end of the present life they entered into Nibbana. They are enlightened and there is no rebirth for them at all.

Guests: Do you have Hell in Buddhism?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Yes. Some of the people not only did not practice the Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom but also indulge in unworthy bad practices. They end in Hell upon death. They can also become hungry ghost or reborn as animal.

Guests: Those who went to Hell and those who went to Nibbana can they come back to the human plane?

Those people who are enlightened by the practice of Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom fulfilled

all requirements to enter Nibbana or Ultimate Goal of Freedom. Those people who spent time in Hell and upon completion of his time in Hell he can be reborn in human plane. It is like a person guilty of crime has to spent time in jail, and when the jail time is fully served, he is free to return to the society. The persons who completed the Hell time and they feel remorse and undergo rehabilitation himself by doing good deeds they can be reborn as celestial beings or Brahmas and eventually can also achieve the Ultimate Goal of Freedom.

Guests: How does the Buddhist devoted or lookup to Buddha?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Yes, all Buddhist are devoted to Buddha. But, Buddhists devotion to Buddha is neither as a Creator God nor as a source for salvation. We devoted to Buddha as a great teacher who taught us to achieve a peaceful life and to obtain the Ultimate Goal of Freedom.

Guests: We, the Christian have Bible. Does Buddhist have Tipitakas that is a compilation of all of the Buddha teachings?

When Buddha was living there were many disciples and attendants who accompanied him at all times where ever he went. They all not only listened to the Dhamma talks but also memorized all of them by heart. After the death of Buddha, all disciples and attendants have conferences to rigorously made comparison and systematically categorized and record them. After the death of Buddha and within the two thousand five hundred years period, there are six Sangha Councils.

We find that all Buddhist including the community of monks and lay people did neither try to alter the original Pâli teachings of Buddha by adding new concepts and ideas nor remove the original Pâli to replace with new interpretations. Therefore, the Tipitakas we have today are same Tipitakas we have two thousand five hundred years ago.

Guests: In this original Tipitakas, how many different kinds are there?

Sitagu Sayadaw: The Tipitakas are Group into three groups. One group is called Suttanta. It

includes all kinds of practices and conducts. It includes all kinds of description of nature of Dhamma, the lectures, the questions and answers, the life stories, the disciplines, the lessons and meditation methods/instructions.

The second group is called Vinaya. It includes the disciplines lay down by Buddha for the community of monks and novices, the procedure of ordination and of novice initiation, and the formal method and instructions to cure the fault if committed by monks.

The third group is called Abhidhamma. It is the Psychological and Philosophical teachings of Buddha and it includes the description of how the human beings, celestial beings, the animals, and living beings in hells are made up of, how the go through the rounds of rebirth, how the aggregates , names and form arises and cease.

Within two thousand five hundred years, there are many authors and writers wrote commentaries about the Buddha's teachings. There are also thousands of sub-commentaries within this period. But, the original teachings of

Buddha were preserved as it was taught. There are forty books in Tipitakas. It will be about thirty times larger by volume than the Christian Bible.

Guests: Is the Mahayana Tipitakas and Theravada Tipitikas are the same? Are they different?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Even though the Theravada Tipitikas originated in India and then spread to Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia within the two thousand and five hundred years under various periods, under various Masters, the original text was not alter or made addition and it was reaffirmed by the Community of Sangha Conventions attended by all counties and it was adopted as it was original taught by Gautama Buddha.

On the other hand, the Mahayana Group the Mahayana Tipitakas spread to Tibet, China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. But, the Community of Mahayana Sangha traditional did not have a Convention and therefore no rigorous comparison was made among them. Therefore, Mahayana Tipitakas are different in different countries, and

they adopt different practices in different countries.

Guests: Is the Buddhist entering the Nibbana the same as the Christian entering the Heaven?

Sitagu Sayadaw: It is totally different. The Heaven in Christianity is abode somewhere in the sky. According to the Buddha Abhidhamma, if there is a becoming in a new abode somewhere in the sky, then it is neither the Ultimate Truth nor the Ultimate Peace. If there are a fraction of the remaining name and form then you have the equivalent fraction of the suffering remaining.

The Nibbana in Buddhism is like an oil lamp with oil and a piece of wick, and in that when the oil and the wick are consumed the flame went out. But, if some one was trying to find where the flame was, then would you called that man "crazy" or what? Nibbana is like the flame going out; totally extinguished. There is no remaining name and form or being. Just as the wick and oil were consumed, nothing left to burn. This is the Ultimate peace.

Guests: Can you personally aware that you have attained Nibbāna? What kind of wisdom or knowledge is needed to know that you attained Nibbāna?

Sitagu Sayadaw: Yes, you can know. The things that cover or put out of you sight is the many layers of defilements. You have to remove the many layers of defilements through many levels of wisdom, and then you will reach the highest state of wisdom. You will know that you attained Nibbāna when you attained such a highest wisdom.

For example, it is like you can not observe the smallest germ in you blood cell and that with the aid of microscope, you can observe them. Similarly, the knowledge and wisdom of the ordinary men are covered with defilements and therefore you are unable to see Nibbana. For Ariyas, the enlightened persons, they have completely removed the layers of defilements and thus, they can see Nibbana personally. In summary, every one who attained the highest wisdom, the enlightenment can see Nibbāna.

Sitagu Sayadaw: Do you have any more questions?

Guests: You have explained clearly the Heaven and Nibbāna and we do not have any additional questions. We thank you answering all the questions. If we have additional questions, please let us come and see you.

Sitagu Sayadaw: I am very happy that you all come here to discuss and questions about Buddhism. And I also thank you for being here. I invite everyone to revisit us for discussion and questions. Again, thank you very much.

End of translation

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