

Dhamma Talk by Beelin Sayadaw on 10/17/2010 at MLA.

forefathers. Sumedhā reflected on the mortality of his forefathers who had left all their wealth in the hands of other people. They could not come and look after their property. They could not use any of their former property nor could they take it away with them. Now Sumedhā hoped to take away his wealth in the form of kammic effect by giving it away. In other words, he hoped to gain merit by alms-giving. It is the merit that is called *anugāmika* property because it is the property that always follows the donor in the cycle of life.

There are four kinds of property, namely, *jangama* property, *thāvara* property, *angasama* property, and *anugāmika* property. The commentary describes slaves, cattle and other living things as *jangama* property and the non-moving lifeless things as *thāvara* property. But we will classify property in the traditional way. Gold, silver, clothing, etc., which are easily changeable are to be regarded as *jangama* property. This kind of property is not durable. Although it is one's property, it is another person's possession when it gets into the hands of a thief, a robber, or a swindler. For example, a pen or a watch that is stolen by a pickpocket becomes his property, and it is hard to recover it, unless it bears identification or there is someone to testify to your ownership. So you cannot own a thing permanently if it can change hands easily. It may be yours now, but it may belong to another the next moment.

So gold, silver, etc., which are not of immediate use to us have to be changed into permanent property such as land, buildings, etc. A permanent property cannot be moved secretly, and so it is more durable than movable property. Yet you may lose it when a powerful man legally claims it by right of inheritance. Or you may lose it because you cannot count on it through the change of times or situation. You cannot always count on it, and so it is better to change it into *angasama* property or property like the parts of your body. You carry this property wherever you go just like your legs or hands. This kind of property is a person's occupation like painting, teaching, writing, dancing, medicine, law, and so forth.

A man can earn his living by his profession. It cannot be robbed from him, and so people spend money on the education of their children. But vocational training or knowledge may be of no use if the law forbids its practice. So more solid than the property of profession is the *anugāmi* property in the form of alms-giving, morality, etc. Nobody can steal it, or rob you of it, or prevent it from producing its wholesome kammic effect. It will follow you in your life cycle and prove beneficial. So Sumedhā thought of turning his wealth into the most solid property or *anugāmi* property that he could take with him on his death.

So Bodhisatta Sumedhā gave away all his wealth and became an ascetic. He was then sixteen or at most twenty years old. As a young ascetic, he developed concentration, he trained his mind, and within seven days he attained *jhāna* and psychic power. Later on he offered himself as a bridge at the foot of the Dīpaṅkara Buddha who predicted that he would become a Buddha.

Here the *Bodhisatta*'s intention to give away all his wealth is right intention or the thought of renunciation, as were his thoughts of becoming an ascetic, and trying to attain *jhāna* and psychic power. His thought of seeking Buddhahood by offering his body to be used as a bridge by the Buddha was also right intention.

Likewise, the thought of making daily devotion before the shrine of the Buddha and observing the five precepts, etc., are thoughts of renunciation. So are the thoughts of observing the eight precepts on *uposatha* days, or the thoughts of hearing the Dhamma and practising it. Here the practise of the Dhamma means renunciation of desirable and pleasant sense objects. The Dhamma will be foreign to those who are steeped in sensuous pleasures. So although you urge them to practise it, they will refuse to do so on one pretext or another.

You have thoughts of non-hatred (*avyāpāda*) when you diffuse love and goodwill towards a person or persons, or when you are interested in their

Seven Kinds of Noble Treasures

There are seven kinds of noble treasures. The first one is *Saddhā*, faith or belief or confidence in the Buddha or in the enlightenment of the Buddha. That means one has faith, one believes that Buddha was a real enlightened person and the Buddha was the one who knew or understood what is to be understood in the world without outside help. And the Buddha was the one who was endowed with wisdom, conduct, and so on. That means you know the formula: *Iti pi so Bhagavā, Araham, Sammāsambuddho Vijjācaraṇasampanno Sugato Lokavidū Anuttaro Purisadamma-Sārathi Satthā Deva-Manussānam Buddhō Bhagavā*. A person understands or believes in the Buddha as a person who knows what is to be known in the world (*Lokavidū*) and knows it correctly without help from any other person (*Sammāsambuddho*), and so on. If a person believes in this way, he is said to have faith, or confidence, or belief in the Buddha and his enlightenment. We may extend this to include the belief or faith in the Dhamma, the Sangha, and also the practice. This is the first spiritual treasure.

The second treasure is *Sīla*, purity of moral conduct. Purity of moral conduct or keeping the precepts is also a spiritual treasure, keeping the five precepts — not killing, not stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no intoxicants. Keeping these precepts is called a spiritual treasure. It is precious for those who keep them. All followers of the Buddha or all those who claim to be followers of the Buddha are expected to keep at least these five precepts. These precepts are also called *Upāsaka Sīla*, *Sīla* of those who follow the Buddha. So keeping moral precepts or keeping one's moral conduct clean is one spiritual treasure. This also you possess if you take and keep precepts. So this is the second spiritual treasure.

The third is moral shame. In *Pāli* it is called *Hiri*. Moral shame means shame in doing unwholesome acts, shame in killing, shame in stealing, and so on. Because of this moral shame people refrain from breaking the rules; people refrain from killing living beings, from taking what is not given, and so on. This moral shame is also a spiritual treasure. It is a precious

treasure for us. So long as we possess this moral shame, we will abstain from doing what is wrong. If we do not possess it, then we will do what we like. And most of what we do will be unwholesome acts. So moral shame is one of the wholesome qualities one should possess. Here it is called riches or treasure or in *Pāli* it is called Dhamma.

Then the next one is — you may have guessed it — moral fear or in *Pāli* *Ottappa*. Moral fear means not really fear, but it is fear of consequences of immoral acts. Because if we do something wrong, first we will be censured or blamed by noble persons and then we will experience the painful consequences of these immoral acts. Because we are afraid of these painful results we refrain from doing immoral acts. This is also a treasure.

These two always go together. When there is *Hiri* (moral shame) there is *Ottappa* (moral fear) and when there is *Ottappa*, there is *Hiri*. So moral shame and moral fear — these two are described in the discourses as protectors of the world. So long as beings or so long as people keep these two treasures, then the world or society of man will be in good shape. Once people lose either moral shame, or moral fear, or both, society will become contaminated. So, these two are called *Lokapāla Dhammas*, those qualities that protect the world from becoming immoral and so on. These two are also spiritual treasures we should cherish.

The fifth one is called learning. Learning is also called treasure. In *Pāli* it is *Suta*. That means learning or understanding the teachings of the Buddha, not just learning anything. Much learning in *Pāli* is called *Bahusuta*, *Bahu* means many or much, *Suta* means hearing. In the olden days there were no books and whatever you wanted to know, you knew from hearing of the talks of other people, your teachers. So it is called *Bahusuta*, much hearing. This means being knowledgeable about the teachings of the Buddha both in theory and practice. This is one spiritual treasure we should possess. You may acquire this treasure by reading books, by asking questions, by having discussions with other people, and also by practicing what you understand.

And the sixth treasure is *Cāga*. *Cāga* means giving away, it is like *Dāna*. People are instructed not to be much attached to what they possess and also to share with other people what they have. It is described that people should be open-handed, something like ready to give to other people. Such people are called 'ones whose hands are washed'. That means ones whose hands are washed free of stinginess. So it is one who has little or no stinginess, who is always ready to share what he possesses with other people. Such a person is said to have *Cāga*. This is also one of the treasures.

And the seventh one and the last one is *Paññā*, knowledge. Here also *Paññā* does not mean just knowledge of anything. But here *Paññā* is described as the knowledge of arising and disappearing of all objects. This *Paññā* you get only when you practice *Vipassanā* meditation. So you practice *Vipassanā* meditation and you at one stage see objects you put your mind on, like arising and disappearing. Any object that you take as an object comes and then goes away. When you see them clearly in your mind you are said to possess this knowledge of arising and disappearing. This knowledge of arising and disappearing is described as leading to the exhaustion of suffering. This can lead to cessation of suffering although this is a lower stage in *Vipassanā* or insight knowledge. This understanding of arising and disappearing is very important. If we do not see the arising and disappearing of the objects, we will not see them as impermanence, as suffering, as no soul, or as out of control. So this is the last of these spiritual treasures, the seventh.

These we should try to possess and I think all of us possess these seven spiritual treasures. And if we possess these seven spiritual treasures nobody can say that we are poor. Although we may be poor in material things, we are not poor in spiritual matters. So it is good to understand that these qualities are called treasures. These treasures are the real treasures and not the material things because material treasures are common to dangers. That means they can be burnt, they can be washed away by water, they can be confiscated by the government or the king, they can be taken away by those sons and daughters whom people don't like, and they can be stolen.

So the material things are common to those dangers. But these seven spiritual treasures are not common to these. They cannot be burnt, they cannot be stolen away, and so on. So long as we possess these treasures we are rich, we are spiritually rich.

Sādhu!

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