

ALIN – KYAN

Light that Shines

The Manual of True Knowledge



According to Rev. Ledi Sayadaw, human beings are inherently, embedded in them the Ignorance, and later gather knowledge through exposure and life experience in their later lives. We can classify the ignorance and knowledge (light) into five separate and distinct kinds. The five kinds of ignorance are:

A. The five kinds of Ignorance are:

- A1. Ignorance of Kamma, *Kamma-sammoha*;**
- A2. Ignorance of Dhamma, *Dhamma-sammoha*;**
- A3. Ignorance of Causality, *Paccaya-sammoha*;**
- A4. Ignorance of the Three Characteristics of Existence, *Lakkhana-sammoha*;**
- A5. Ignorance of Nibbana, *Nibbana-sammoha*.**

And the five kinds of knowledge (Lights) are:

B. The five kinds of Light (Knowledge) are:

B1. Knowledge in seeing that all beings have kamma only as their own property, *Kammassakata-nana*;

B2. Knowledge in being firmly settled about the Dhamma, *Dhamma-vavatthana-nana*;

B3. Knowledge in Comprehending the Law of Causality, *Paccava-vavatthana-nana*;

B4. Knowledge in Realizing the Three Characteristics of Existence, *Lakkhana-pativedha-nana*.-

B5. Knowledge in Realizing Nibbana, *Nibbana--pativedha nana*.

Due to our inherent ignorance and lack of knowledge taught by Buddha in his Buddha Dhamma, obviously, the first pair of light (knowledge) that we could expound on is:

The First Pair of Knowledge:

**?? Not understanding kamma, and
?? Not understanding the resultant of kamma.**

Not understanding kamma.

In the raw state of the human mind, human being would not understand the fact that all beings have **kamma** only as their own property; that they must inherit their own **kamma**: that **kamma** alone is their origin; that **kamma** alone is their real relative; and that **kamma** alone is their real refuge.

Not understanding which of their actions - **bodily, verbal, or mental** - are unwholesome in the sense that they are kammically unprofitable (*a-kusalo*).[1]

- a. **Not understanding** the fact that **unwholesome actions bring unwholesome resultants** in their future births, and would cast them down into the Four Lower Worlds of unfortunate existences (*apaya*).

- b. **Not understanding** which of their actions - **bodily, verbal, or mental** - are **wholesome** i.e., kammically profitable (*kusalo*).[2]
- c. **Not understanding** the fact that **wholesome actions bring wholesome resultants in their future births**, and would send them to the fortunate existences of the human world and the world of devas. Not understanding the nature and characteristics of kamma in the above stated manner therefore amounts to 'not understanding kamma'.

Not understanding the resultant of kamma:

- a. Not understanding the fact that *lives of beings do not end at their biological death*, but that they would arise in another existence where their kamma casts them, sends them, drags them. assigns them, or places them.
- b. Not understanding the fact that *there exist an infinite numbers of sentient beings* - though not visible to the ordinary human eye - in the tortuous worlds of *niraya*, hungry spirits (*petas*), fallen spirits (*asurakdvas*), and animals (some species common to human knowledge.)[3]
- c. Not understanding the fact that if they commit unwholesome acts they are liable to be born in those four lower worlds (*apaya*), after their death.
- d. Not understanding the fact that **there exist infinite numbers and types of human beings**, visible to the ordinary human eye, as well as an infinite number of spirits and devas, good or bad, together with those inhabiting the six deva *lokas* (worlds) and higher up, the Brahma Lokas of the Fine-Material Realms (*rupa brahmas*) and Non-Material Realms (*arupa brahmas*).
- e. Not understanding the fact that through acquisition of merit such as giving (*dana*), virtue or morality (*sila*) and developing concentration (*bhavana*) as beings are born in those fortunate

planes of the human world and the celestial realms of devas and brahmas.

- f. Not understanding the fact that there exists the round of births (*samsara*), that is beginningless and endless.
- g. Not understanding the fact that all beings are subjected to good or bad destinies through their own acts, good or bad as the case may be, and that beings are born from existence to existence, incessantly, according as their own kamma dictates.[4]

Failure in understanding all those things is called pure Ignorance of Kamma (*kamma-sammoha*)

The First Pair of Light (Knowledge)

The first pair of light, Kammassakata-nana.- (The First Light)
Kammassakata-nana that human being need to understand is the understanding of kamma and the resultant of kamma in order to shed light on enabling him (her) how to steer his (her) future existence in the Samsara. The understanding of this is in pali is - *Kammassakata-nana*
The first set of Light is the Understanding kamma and understanding the resultant of kamma.

- a. Understanding kamma, and
- b. Understanding the resultant of kamma.

Understanding 'kamma' and its resultant:

1. Understanding the fact that all beings have kamma only as their own property; that they must inherit their own kamma; that kamma alone is their real relative; and that kamma alone is their real refuge.
2. Understanding which of their actions - bodily, verbal, mental - are unwholesome or kammically unprofitable, that they would bring unwholesome resultants in their future births, and would cast them down into the Four Lower Worlds.
3. Understanding that such and such actions of theirs are wholesome or kammically profitable; that they would bring wholesome resultants in their future births, and would send them to the fortunate existences of the human world and the worlds of devas.

It is indeed dreadful, if one has not acquired the knowledge of kamma and its resultants. The mere condition of one's pure ignorance of kamma is dreadful, because it could lead one to the wrong views. There are all kinds of wrong views that stems from the pure ignorance (*miccha-ditthi*).

However, the understanding of the kamma and its resultant *Kammassakata-nana*, is the refuge for the wayfarers of *samsara*, the

beginningless round of births. It is only under the guidance of this Light that beings do meritorious things such as **giving**, observe **morality**, or **develop mental concentration** and attain successful existences as men or devas or Brahmas.

And it is this Light that enables one to practice wholesome deeds to perfection (*parami kusalo*) that are the prerequisites for enlightenment of all classes such as the Perfect Self-Enlightenment of a Buddha. or the solitary Self-Enlightenment of a *Pacceka-buddha*, or the arahatship as Noble Disciples (*savaka bodhi*).

The Light of *Kammassakata-nana* exists in those men and devas in the innumerable universes or world systems, who have Right View or *Samma ditthi*. In our universe too, even during the 'empty' kappas, i.e., where the world goes without the benefit of any Buddha, this Light exists. By Right View (*samma ditthi*), of course, we mean this Light of *Kammassakata-nana*.

In the current state of the world affair, at the present time, this Light prevails among the **Buddhists** and **Hindus** in the world. The Hindus here referred to the Brahmin.

Among people of other creeds, and among animals, this Light does not exist. Only few among the inhabitants of the tortuous realms of *niraya*, the fallen spirits (*asurakaya* world) and the hungry spirits (*peta* world) have the benefit of this Light. Those beings who, do not possess such Light dwell in the darkness of *kamma-sammoha*. As they are enveloped in pure Ignorance, the path leading to successful existences in their round of births is lost to them. And being incapable of lifting themselves up to the fortunate planes of **human**, **deva** or **Brahma** existences, they are destined to go down to the Lower Worlds, whose portals are ever wide open. For these people, thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of existences may pass without their ever getting the slightest benefit of this beneficent Light (knowledge).

Only in the case of a confirmed **Buddha-to-be**, i.e., a bodhisatta who has obtained the word of assurance from a living Buddha about his future Buddhahood in specific terms, has the shroud of

ignorance been lifted already so that even when born an animal, he is yet endowed with this Light. In fact, this Light belongs to the holders of Right View even during the world-cycles (systems) or *kappas* devoid of any Buddha. In those universes that lack the benefit of a Buddha's arising; and also considering the fact that Buddhas do not arise in the world only to expound this Light but to expound the Light of Knowledge that penetrates the Four Noble Truths (*catu sacca pativedha-nana*); the Light of *Kammassakata-nana* cannot be called the Light of the Buddha's Teaching - in spite of its occurrence in many a Buddhist text. This light by its characteristic is merely a worldly Light, the Light that does not shed its rays beyond *samsara*.

People who have the benefit of the Buddha's Teaching, therefore, if they are wise enough, will not remain satisfied with the mere Light of *Kammassakata-nana* - which is not really meant by the Buddha - but will rouse themselves up to acquire the true light of the Buddha's Teaching. People who are wise should therefore strive hard to understand beyond this light and to understand the **Four Noble Truth** expounded by Buddha.

The Second Pair of Light (Knowledge)

We shall now go into the pure ignorance of the Dhamma and the existence of Dhamma. The second set of pair of light is not understanding of the Dhamma *Dhamma-sammoha* and its existence of Dhamma. *Dhamma-vavatthana-nana*.

1. **Not understanding the Dhamma as Dhamma;**
2. **Not understanding the ultimate truth about existence** in that what has generally been taken as person (*puggala*), being (*satta*), self or soul (*atta*) or a life (*jiva*), is in truth and reality the mere compounded existence of materiality and mentality (mind-and-matter, *nama-rupa*) comprising the five aggregates.

Out of this Pure Ignorance of the Dhamma there spring the three Perversions (*vipallasa*), namely, (i) Perverted perception (*sanna vipallasa*), (ii) Perverted consciousness (*citta vipallasa*) and (iii) Perverted view (*ditthi vipallasa*). The three perversions that grow out of one's pure ignorance are:

- a. **Error in Perception** means having the wrong perception about things, such as: dhamma or mere phenomena is not perceived as dhamma or mere phenomena. but as person, being, self (soul), a life, woman or man, (etc.).
- b. **Error in Thinking** means inability to think of dhamma as dhamma, but thinking only in terms of person, being, self (soul), a life, woman or man. (etc.).
- c. **Error in Belief** means taking a wrong, perverted view of things: dhamma are not seen as dhamma, but taken for granted, through convention, as person, being, self (soul), a life, woman or man, (etc.).

(These, then, are the three Errors arising out pure Ignorance of the Dhamma).

Out of those three Errors, there grow ten kinds of misdeeds such as killing living things (**panatipata**), as well as Wrong Views and all sorts of evil.

Dhammavavatthana-nana (The Second Light):-

Knowledge in being firmly settled in the Dhamma means:-

1. Clear understanding that in all the world no such thing as person, being, self (soul), or a life, woman or man, really exists but only mere phenomena or dhamma, mind-and-matter (*nama-rupa*, mentality-materiality).
2. Perceiving the distinction between **physical phenomena** (*rupa*) and **mental phenomena** (*nama*);
 - a. Perceiving the distinction between one physical phenomenon and another among the physical phenomena;
 - b. Perceiving the distinction between one mental phenomenon and another among the mental phenomena.

It means in brief, the whole thing amounts to Right View (***samma ditthi***), which also goes by the name of Purification of View (***Ditthi-visuddhi***).

Indeed, it can be considered as Dreadful if one is in Pure Ignorance of the Dhamma. It is only because of the Buddha's Teaching that we can gain the clear understanding that **mentality--and-materiality**, a composite of the five aggregates of existence, are mere phenomena or dhamma in ultimate truth. Without the benefit of the Buddha's Teaching, beings may pass from one existence to another a hundred times, a thousand times, tens of thousands of times, or an infinite number of times (***asankheyya***), and yet no such knowledge can dawn on them. This is the Light that only the Buddha's Teaching can provide.

Even at present when the golden opportunity of the Buddha's Teaching is available, there are multitudes who, not realizing dhamma as dhamma, not understanding materiality as mere materiality and not understanding mentality as mere mentality, are shrouded by this dreadful Pure Ignorance of the Dhamma. These are the people who will be left out helpless and remain there in pure darkness. **Lacking this Light in**

understanding the materiality and mentality, their existence is marked by a proliferation of the three Perversions, the ten kinds of misdeeds, all kinds of wrong views and consequent evils. Thus, release from the rigorous round of births is not in sight for them. Indeed, they are heading straight for the whirlpool of *samsara*, to drift, sink, and drowned. Therefore, the best approach for the wise and wary is to strive to understand the materiality-mentality phenomena, and gain analytical insight.

The Third Pair of Light (Knowledge)

The third set of knowledge of Light is the pure Ignorance of Causality (*Paccaya-sammoha*) and the Third Light (*Paccaya-vavatthana--nana*) Knowledge in Comprehending the Law of Causality. We shall now look at the third set of light in detail - *Paccaya-sammoha* and *Paccaya-vavatthana-nana*. This third light will enable one to the status of *Cula-sotapanna*, (Sula Tawtarpan).

The Pure Ignorance of Casualty - *Paccaya-sammoha*.

1. Not understanding the origin of materiality-and-mentality.
2. Not understanding the Law of Dependent Origination (*paticca-samuppada*) [5], as declared by the Buddha: "With Ignorance (*avijja*) as condition, there arise Volitional Activities (*sankhara*); with volitional activities as condition, there arises Consciousness (*vinnana*); with consciousness as condition, there arise Mentality-and-Materiality (*nama-rupa*; ... (P:) thus there arises this 'whole mass of ills' *dukkhakkhandha*."

When one is ignorant of this Law of Causality, one firmly holds the wrong view of *karaka-ditthi*, insisting that if there is an action there is a doer, so that materiality and mentality cannot be seen as distinct phenomena or dhamma, but as some person or being.[6]

Paccaya-vavatthana-nana: (The Third Light)

Knowledge in comprehending the Law of Causality means:-

1. Understanding the origin of materiality-and-mentality.
2. Understanding the twelve constituents (*anga*) that make up the Law of Dependent Origination as declared by the Buddha thus: "With Ignorance as condition, there arise Volitional Activities; with volitional activities as condition, there arises Consciousness; ... mentality and materiality; ... the six Sense-Bases (*salayatana*); ... Contact (*phassa*); ... Feeling (*vedana*), ... Craving (*tanha*), ... Clinging (*upadana*); ... the Process of Becoming (*bhava*); ... Birth (*jati*), ... Ageing and Death (*jara-marana*), Sorrow (*soka*), Lamentation (*parideva*), Pain, Suffering (*dukkha*), Grief (*domanassa*), and Despair

(*upayasa*). Thus, there arises this 'whole mass of ills' (*dukkhakkhandha*)" [7].

Pure Ignorance of Casualty.

When one is in the state of the Pure Ignorance of Causality, three kinds of grave Wrong Views arise, namely:

1. The Wrong View of No-cause (*A-hetuka ditthi*)[8]
2. The Wrong View that the world is created by an Eternal God (*visamahetu ditthi*)[9].
3. The Wrong View that the world is a product of past deeds (*pubbekata hetu ditthi*)[10].

Ahetuka ditthi holds that all things in the world, whether physical phenomena or mental phenomena, arise through no cause, exist through no cause, **that all things happen by mere chance**. There is no cause assigned for its happening.

Visamehetu ditthi believes in a cause but it assigns the cause to an **Omnipotent Creator**, an Eternal God or Providence. All beings, all physical and mental phenomena, all things, all activities, **all happenings are in accordance with Providence**. This is in fact baseless, untenable, uneven or unjust. **There is Unjustified Cause of Creation**.

Pubbekata hetu ditthi believes in reasoned Cause and, while rejecting the theory of a Creator, accepts the view that the world (i.e., all materiality and mentality) arises, and is conditioned by **wholesome and unwholesome actions done by beings in their past existences**. This view takes into account only past kamma, in total disregard of present volitional activities. **There is misleading belief in past-kamma alone**.

Of these three Wrong Views, *Ahetuka ditthi* is a gross view, as indeed is *Visama hetu ditthi*. *Pubbekata hetu ditthi*, although it is partially correct, is relatively less erroneous.

How Pubbekata hetu ditthi is partially right:-

Materiality and mentality are conditioned by:-

1. Past kamma,
2. Present consciousness or *citta*, temperature prevailing at present (*utu*), and nutriment in the present life (*ahara*).

That being so, this view is correct in so far as it relates to materiality and mentality which arise on account of past kamma; but as regards all other materiality and mentality caused by Consciousness, Temperature or Nutriment it is wrong.

If we apply the Law of Dependent Origination this view holds good for those factors which are conditioned by past kamma[11]. but it is wrong in respect of those which are themselves the present causes (that are the 'conditions for rebirth-linking in the future')[12], namely, Ignorance, Volitional Activities, Craving, Clinging and the Process of Becoming. If we consider it in the light of the Doctrine of Relations (*Patthana*), this view recognizes only the relationship of past kamma to its effects (*nanakkhanika kamma paccaya*) and rejects the twenty-three other Relations as also the Relation of Co-nascent or Co-existent kamma (*sahajata kamma paccaya*)[13]. Thus *Pubbekatahetuditthi*, while partially right, is substantially wrong.

The above mentioned three kinds of Wrong View, together with all sorts of other false views and Skeptical Doubt (*vicikiccha*) spring from the Pure Ignorance of Causality.

Cula-sotapanna or the Virtuous One

To understand Dependent Origination or to gain Knowledge in comprehending the Law of Causality enables one to discard the three aforesaid Wrong Views of No-cause, Unjustified Cause of Creation, and misleading belief in past-kamma alone. **In fact this Knowledge equips one to be a virtuous one, ever freed from the ignoble destinies of the Four Lower Worlds, a *Cula-sotapanna*, (*Sula Tawtarpan*) a future-stream-winner' - so the Commentaries say. This is a well worth for one to work hard at. .**

The Fourth Pair of Light (Knowledge)

The fourth knowledge is the pure ignorance of the **Three Characteristics of Existence** (*lakkhana-sammoha*) and the **Realization of the Three Characteristics of Existence** (*lakkhana-pativedha-nana*). It is this realization, this Light, that enables the Buddha, the *Pacceka buddhas* and the *Arahats* to gain release from the darkness of defilements (*kilesa*). We shall now look at the fourth set of light in detail - (*lakkhana-sammoha*) and (*lakkhana-pativedha-nana*).

When one is embedded in ignorance and has the inability to understand the fact about the interrelated phenomena of materiality and mentality, then he (she) is ignorant in understanding the three characteristics of existence.

Not Understanding the Three Characteristics of Existence (*lakkhana-sammoha*)

- a. That they have the character of impermanence (*anicca*), being in a rapid state of flux;
- b. That they have the character of suffering and pain (*dukkha*), very much to be dreaded.
- c. That they have the character of not-self (*anatta*) in the sense that they are mere conditioned phenomena lacking substance, essence or life that could in truth and reality be called a person or a being at all.

Realization of the Three Characteristics of Existence - *Lakkhanapativedha-nana*

When a person comes to the realization of the three characteristics of existence, one has attained the insight to see the truth as it truly is. Realizing through insight the truth about the interrelated phenomena of materiality and mentality in their true character:

- a. That they are impermanent or transient, ever in a rapid state of flux (*anicca*);
- b. That they are fraught with suffering and pain, truly to be dreaded (*dukkha*);

- c. That they do not make up any 'self' or person or being because they lack substance, essence or life (*anatta*).

It is this realization, this Light, that enables the **Buddha**, the *Pacceka buddhas* and the *Arahats* to gain release from the darkness of defilements (*kilesa*) the dungeon of fettered existence (*samyojana*), the stout bonds of Craving (*tanha*) that bind all worldlings, keeping them hopelessly entangled, thereby exposing them forever to the perils and ills of *Samsara*.

Failing to realize the Three Characteristics, both *bhikkhu* and *layman* alike fumble in the darkness of their own defilements, in their dungeon of fettered existence. Bound by stout bonds of Craving, they are entangled and are forever exposed to the perils and ills of samsara.

Only when they attain the Light of this Knowledge do they dispel the darkness of Pure Ignorance of the Three Characteristics, then and only then can they gain release from the bondage of their own Craving, and attain *Nibbana*.

The Fifth Pair of Light (Knowledge)

The fifth set of knowledge is the ignorance of a person on the existence of Nibbana (*nibbana- sammoha*) and the realization of Nibbana. Fifth Light Knowledge in Realizing Nibbana (*nibbana-pativedha-nana*). We shall now look at the fifth set of light in details.

Most beings, as wayfarers in the woeful round of existences, are ignorant of their true quandary. They fail to understand the right practice by which they can bring about a complete cessation of all ill (*dukkha*) through the cutting off of all fetters and entanglements of their own Craving. They do not know that there is such a practice under the Buddha's Teaching that can save them from the darkness of defilements and having stilled their burning desires, land them in the Absolute Peace (*santi*) which is *Nibbana*.

As the five kinds of Pure Ignorance give way to the five kinds of Light stage by stage, once the Fifth Light is attained, the whole darkness of the five kinds of Ignorance are completely dispelled. The total extinction of this whole mass of Ignorance with no possibility of its ever arising again is the final goal of Peace or Tranquillity (*santi*) or *Nibbana*.

And with the total extinction of the five kinds of Pure Ignorance, there also go to extinction all kinds of misdeeds, all forms of evil, all Wrong Views, and all misguided actions, thereby bringing to the end of rebirth in the woeful existences, in the four Lower Worlds.

Realization of Nibbana - Nibbana-pativedha-nana:

Knowing well that such a worthy goal of Peace or Tranquillity exists; and realizing this Peace through one's own experience is, in short, called the Light of *Nibbana* or *Nibbana-pativedha-nana*. The four stages of enlightenment or Knowledge along the Noble Path are called *Nibbana-pativedha-nana*.

We have addressed the five kinds of pure ignorance and the five kinds of lights (knowledge) that could bring about the realization of peace and tranquility for everyone who has faith in the Buddha teaching. On conclusion, we shall let the five kinds of lights shine our way in reaching for the goal of attaining the peace and tranquility, Nibbana.

The five kinds of Lights that we shall keep in mind, and to commit to memory, are:

- 1. Knowledge in seeing that all beings have kamma only as their own property, *Kammassakata-nana*;**
- 2. Knowledge in being firmly settled about the Dhamma, *Dhamma-vavatthana-nana*;**
- 3. Knowledge in Comprehending the Law of Causality, *Paccava-vavatthana-nana*;**
- 4. Knowledge in Realizing the Three Characteristics of Existence, *Lakkhana-pativedha-nana*.**
- 5. Knowledge in Realizing Nibbana, *Nibbana--pativedha nana*.**

Reference: ALIN – KYAN - The Manual of Light by Mahathera Ledi Sayadaw, Aggamahapandita, D.Litt.

