



Burmese Buddhist Temple *Newsletter*

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This marble Buddha statue is at the 2nd floor of the Burmese Buddhist Temple Singapore, it was donated by the late Venerable Ledi Sayadaw of Myanmar in 1916 to the old Burmese Buddhist Temple at Kinta Road Singapore.

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Editorial

Everyone of us has experienced anger. It is a common feeling. Some people feel proud of it and boast of it loudly and clearly. They seem to enjoy it like having the chance to enforce their power over some one else. Few realised that anger is a form of suffering and so they would rather control their anger and avoid that kind of suffering . Some also realised the premises that everyone wants to be happy and avoid suffering and since anger is a form of suffering why choose to be angry and suffer? So it looks like in life we have the choice to be calm, peaceful and be happy or be agitated, angry and suffer.

We also could think of the consequences of being angry at some one. Usually in a fit of anger, we tend to say something that would hurt our enemy most deeply. Such harsh words would not be said under normal circumstances. They would also cause us much regret later and make it difficult for us to reconcile with the enemy.

Remember to fill your mind with loving kindness and compassion as the Buddha teaches about Kamma. Kamma is not about physical action only. Kamma includes mental action as well as oral action (speech). Be mindful of what we think, what we do with our hands and what we say. Each type of activity, (body, speech and mind) is kamma and each has its own results. Put it simply, good kamma brings good results which brings happiness while bad kamma brings bad results which is suffering. These kammic results may take place in this life or in the next birth. To be more specific, generosity and kind heartedness bring wealth and happiness while stinginess and bad-heartedness results in poverty and suffering. In rebirth, the interest we have to pay for being unkind could be heavy, and the result for being kind, considerate and helpful could led to many fold of happiness. This is the reality of life.

However, ideally speaking, fill your mind with loving kindness and compassion, the immediate result of feeling happy is immediate. Let it be your natural way of thinking and happiness will result accordingly according to nature.



The mother with the complaining daughter

When we live with others it is normal that there will be matters that are disagreeable to us. No matter how much we love them, problems can arise simply through living close together with others. The more love there is, the more problems arise.

To solve problems in our lives, we should always solve them within ourselves first. Our relationship with others will then gradually improve. Give up your own bad actions and make good actions within yourself. You may feel that others are wrong or not good, but you should leave their badness alone for the moment: use the principle or skillful means of awakening your own mindfulness with the adage: "Wrong and more wrong."

When I was in Japan, a woman came to see me one day to have a chat. She got things off her chest, telling me that she was depressed over one of her daughters. This daughter had just finished doing a bachelor's degree at university and was working. She was always finding fault with her mother, saying for example that she didn't eat properly, that she walked too loudly, that she closed the doors too loudly or put things down carelessly. She kept track of all the tiny little things to complain about. The mother was so disturbed by it that she didn't feel like entering the house at all. She was

hurt to have such an ungrateful daughter. She shouldn't be complaining like this.

I sat and listened to her story until she had finished. I had met her for the first time that day. She had seen the television program about me walking in Japan and had been inspired by it. At the time she was working as a translator. She was a learned person. Judging from her mannerisms, she was a very proper person, very tidy and perhaps one who tended towards a critical nature (*dosacarita*). I asked her how her daughter behaved with her father, and she said there was no problem there, that their relationship was normal, like that of fathers and daughters everywhere. The problem was only with her mother.

Everything has a cause. Delving deeper into the matter, I asked her 'When your daughter was very small, you were always nagging her, right?' She admitted that this was true. I guessed that, be it through her own good wishes for her daughter or because of irritation, the mother had nagged her daughter too much, with no consideration for the nature of children. Whatever the daughter did the mother complained about. 'Don't do it like this, don't do it like that.' Whatever the daughter did was wrong. The daughter had been feeling repressed for a long time, so once she became



an adult she was angry at her mother. She probably didn't intend to be that way, but the attachment was already there. Her mother made mistakes too, so she naturally pointed them out. 'Mother, why do you do this, why do you do that?' The daughter's words were none other than the words the mother had used to berate her. She had made the cause herself and it came back at her from her daughter, who was the condition. We must use the principle: we suffer because we think wrongly. If we think right then we can solve suffering. Thinking that her daughter was a bad child, that she was ungrateful, that she shouldn't talk in that way or do such things, was all wrong thinking. She should think instead that 'I was wrong first.' In saying the words that were so disagreeable to her mother, the daughter didn't think much about it or feel very much; she was just reacting automatically. The mother was depressed, hurt, saddened by it and suffered much more over it than her daughter. The mother was experiencing bad kamma and suffering: that's it, 'more wrong.'

Thus we are cautioned with the words, 'wrong first and more wrong'. If the mother understood this, she would have to make up her mind to practise and try not to have a bad reaction when she heard her daughter's words. She would make her mind firm and unshakeable,

maintain her mind in a state of normalcy and calm, that has morality. She should not display displeasure through her facial expressions, her speech or her physical mannerisms, but control her feelings, her actions and her speech, as if nothing had occurred, that there was nothing unusual. In short, she should make herself like with one hand clapping, which makes no sound. Don't be like the temple bell: whenever it strikes, we strike back at it every time, and say the sound is annoying. Let's stop first, and then the sound will gradually get softer until it eventually stops. When we understand properly, we will feel goodwill (*metta*) and compassion (*karuna*).

Apart from this we must train to keep our minds in a normal state, and maintain our speech and actions in a state of normalcy and propriety.

Generosity will be a force for supporting the rapid solution of problems.

- Give with kindly eyes.
- Give with a smiling face.
- Give with kind words.
- Give the gift of forgiveness: forgive each other.

You can give things that people like, even small things, such as sweets or fruits. The receiver will change their feeling immediately. They will feel gladdened and happy, or they will feel love.

This is not a heavy problem. If we understand cause and effect and practise properly according to the principles of Dhamma, the problems will gradually decrease.

Summary

We should examine the principle of kamma in various ways.

- Kamma is our own.
- Kamma is what gives fruit.
- Kamma is our birthplace.
- Kamma is our retinue.
- Kamma is our shelter.

In short, whatever kamma we do, whether good or evil, of that we will receive the fruits. Good actions bring good results, bad actions bring bad results: this is truly a fixed law.

Develop goodwill and needfulness, arouse faith and energy to renounce bad actions and establish yourself in goodness and what is right in all situations. Give rise to shame and fear of wrongdoing and develop pure morality. Then your mind will gradually rise up, giving up evil and doing only good. Finally, you will enter '*sacittapariyodapanam*': purifying your mind, abiding above and beyond good and evil, which are worldly conditions, and penetrating the heart of Buddhism, which is the highest goal, the highest benefit of practising the Dhamma. This is the teaching of all the Buddhas.



Wrong First

In the story of the mother and the complaining daughter, was the latter angry and annoyed; in the story of Venerable Moggallana he was murdered by 500 bandits; in the story of the lay follower Mahakala; in the story of the lady who lost her arm in an accident-in every case each of the people who suffered had created kamma, had made some prior wrongdoing, be it in this life or in a previous life. For instance, in the case of Moggallana and Mahakala, these were matters of kamma done in a previous life; in the case of the mother and the lady who lost her arm, these were matters of kamma in this life. Thus, it is said that no matter what happens to us that causes us disappointment, sorrow, hurt and suffering, we must think 'I was wrong first'.

No matter how much suffering there is, we must be able to bear it. If we can do this, then we won't blame others, even if someone is trying to kill us, because we are receiving the results of our own kamma. We are the ones who create the cause, and other are factors merely conditions. The result arises from the cause.



More wrong

When a child breaks a glass and we are very angry; when the daughter criticised her mother and her mother became angry and hurt; when others say bad things and we are angry and upset: we tend to think 'the child did wrong', because the child broke the glass, or the daughter is wrong because a daughter should not criticise her mother. But in the way of Dhamma it is said that the child breaking the glass was not an intentional act. It is a wrong in body, bodily kamma, but the mind was not wrong. The daughter who complained about her mother probably acted according to the habits and traits accumulated from her mother's complaining about her when she was a small girl. She probably didn't intend to upset her mother so much, but just reacted automatically. Her mind was not upset; the wrong was merely bodily and verbal. The wrong in these two cases was there, but not to a great extent; it was wrong only in bodily and verbal kamma. But the person who becomes angry, and the mother who was angry, these are the ones who are making a lot of kamma, making themselves depressed. The person who gets angry (at the child breaking the glass) and the mother will be making more bad kamma and suffer more. They are more wrong. If it turned out that something happened and they were to die at the same time, the person who

was angry and the mother of the daughter, they might even fall into hell because of the power of their anger, but the child who broke the glass and the daughter who complained about her mother without any strong intention would probably be all right.

Thus we are taught that if we were to be reminded constantly of 'wrong first and more wrong', we would probably not be angry at anybody; we would not become hurt and not become confused. There is only suffering, the cause of suffering, and the practice leading to the end of suffering, or for letting go of suffering, which is morality, concentration and wisdom. When the path arises, then there is cessation and the practice has borne fruit.

We must bring that practice inwards: we must look within ourselves and every time we look within we will find that we were the ones who were wrong first. Thus there is no 'wrong afterwards'. The Dhamma is powerful medicine. If we use it correctly we will get a good result, but if we use it wrongly it can be very harmful, especially if we talk of kamma. Firstly, establish mindfulness and investigate the state of your own mind, asking 'Is my mind in a state of normalcy; is it imbued with goodwill?' When it is good, then look at the state of mind of the other person, asking 'Are they ready to listen to me, and will it be useful? Will they have an adverse reaction?' When you have carefully examined from both sides and are confident that (what you say) will have good results, then you can say it.

Don't speak when the state of your own mind is not good, and don't speak if their state of mind is not good or ready.


One reason that some people lose faith in the Buddha's teaching, or do not believe in it, is that they do not use Dhamma (the teaching) at the right time and place; they use it wrongly, and so hurt others and just increase their own defilements and selfishness. For instance, if there is someone who is less fortunate than us, or experiencing some suffering in life, we might say smugly, 'Oh, bad actions lead to bad results.' We use the Buddha's teaching as a form of abuse, as a disparaging remark, to put down and discourage others and make them despondent about their lives. It is the exact opposite of the Buddha's intention in teaching us to contemplate kamma in order to give rise to goodwill, compassion and heedfulness, and bring peace and happiness into our lives.

How to develop goodwill

1. We must first understand that the various events that occur in our lives are always perfect according to the law of cause and effect, a result of previous kamma. Anger, greed and delusion in our minds are the causes. We must accept responsibility 100%.
2. Try to understand and sympathise with others, reflecting that they are suffering just like us, like all lives, suffering from birth, aging, sickness, death, and

disappointment. In particular, those who abused you are experiencing suffering before you do, so you should feel sorry for them. Even though they may have the advantage and you don't, you need not feel jealous or hurt. If they have the upper hand and are experiencing some happiness resulting from unskillful (*akusalakamma*) or bad kamma, just reflect that this can be compared to someone who is enjoying themselves upstairs, but downstairs the house is on fire. You should feel sorry for them. You no longer have to build kamma and enmity with others, but establish yourself in goodness and proper actions, speech and thoughts.

3. Begin to cultivate mindfulness and wisdom. When you experience a mental object that is not to your liking and a reaction is arising, and your mood is going bad, quickly establish mindfulness, take some deep, slow, rhythmic breaths, and you will begin to become aware of yourself. Do this regularly and do not engage in thoughts of enmity and revenge, complaining or abusive thoughts. Just pacify your mood. If you must think, think in ways that teach your mind. Know how to think correctly; develop mindfulness and develop the wisdom to solve problems.

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4. Practise meditation (*samadhi*) 10 to 15 minutes every morning and evening. Do it often - when you wake up in the morning, after breakfast, in the car, before working, when you knock off from work, before you make an important phone call and any time you start to get upset. Determine not to be angry and look after your mind, watch your mind for the things that used to make you angry and suffer. Firmly practise the meditation on goodwill (*metta*), spread it to all people, all lives without limit, without exception, even those people you do not like. Attend to this, think well, speak well and act well in all circumstances.
 5. Develop *vitakka*, *vicara*, *piti*, *sukha* and *ekaggata*, which are the five factors of absorption concentration (*jhana*). *Vitakka* means the turning of the mind solely to the object of meditation, such as the feeling of the breath that arises as you breathe in and out. Try to establish your mindfulness frequently. If there is *vitakka*, the continuous establishment of mindfulness, in no long time *vicara* will arise. *Vicara* in this case is awareness, knowing that the breath is long, short,

light, heavy, hot or cool, for instance. This awareness is the power that ties the mind more tightly to the object of meditation. Then *piti* (rapture), *sukha* (pleasure) and *ekaggata* (one-pointedness) arise, and you will feel the happiest you have ever felt. Try to develop concentration until you can experience the happiness of meditation often. When you can maintain this state of happiness, then the mind will give rise to goodwill, it will be a mind full of love and happiness.

Sabbe satta sukhita hontu: may all beings be happy. If we understand the truth of kamma and have wisdom, our goodwill will be long lasting; it will be true goodwill.

By Venerable Ajahnmitsuo Savesako
Reference: Fragrance of Dhamma





Practicing For Release ... Nibbana

When we have an eye that is functional, a visual object and light, the sense of sight will arise. The visual object contacts the sense base and sends the impression straight to the heart. Similarly, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and mental cognition arise differing only in the sense organ and their corresponding object being sensed. If this sense impression comes about at the eye it is called *cakkhu-viññāṇa*, for the ear its *sota-viññāṇa*, the nose, *ghāna-viññāṇa*, the tongue* *jivhā-viññāṇa*, the body, *kāya-viññāṇa*, and the mind, *mano-viññāṇa*. All the six kinds of *viññāṇa* (consciousness) are of the same characteristics. They come about, persist and pass away. But this whole process occurs very quickly.

When the mind grasps at *viññāṇa*, we have the feeling that, "I am seeing" or "I am hearing." We then grasp onto the pleasurable and painful feelings that arises, this is *vedanā*. Then the mind forms ideas, which is *saṅkhāra*, and labels them, becoming *saññā* (memory and perception). This is how the *nāmadhammas* (mental aggregates) function together. It is normal for us to experience the world in this way.

All of our sensory experiences function in this

process and the more that we grasp at them, the more that the cycle of pleasure and pain arises. But the Buddha had us stop and investigate this process by separating out the *khandhas*¹ and the elements with *paññā*. We do this in order to see clearly that this heap of *rūpa* is just comprised of the four great elements. It's *sankhata*, something that has formed together and is in a constant state of fluctuation. But it still has to break down and pass away. As for this heap of *nāma* aggregates — *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* — they remain for an even shorter period before they cease.

We must arouse *paññā* in the heart so that it won't go chasing after and carrying around all the things we experience as "mine." It will temporarily leave all the mental impressions alone and not get involved in them. This gives rise to emptiness of self, and just this is *nibbāna*... the extinguished and now cool. This is cessation, the abandonment of the longing and desire for all mental states — non-clinging.

But if we yearn for *nibbāna* and are continually expecting it, then we will never realise *nibbāna*. Luang Pu Chah would always emphasise that we have to let everything go. The most

¹ *Khandhas*: the five aggregates. The material and mental constituents of experience which are identified with and attached to as one's self: 1. Physical form 2. Feelings 3. Memories and perceptions 4. Thought formations 5. Consciousness. *Saccadhamma* the true Dhamma; the true nature of reality.





important thing is to practice towards letting go.

Although we may not let go of all rūpa and nāma one-hundred percent, because this is the level of the arahant, at least we will have some understanding and insight into the phenomena of rūpa and nāma. Depending on the level of our investigation, to a certain extent we can let go in the way we perceive the world. Our suffering will diminish, because we are seeing in accordance with the saccadhamma”.

So why doesn't this wisdom come about regularly? It's because our strength and stability of samādhi isn't yet sufficient. Samādhi is an unshakableness of the heart. It is a heart that has stability, be it “buddho” “dhammo,” “sangho,” the in and out breathing, or whatever we choose. Samādhi will make the heart gather into stillness, even if only for a short instant, so as to give us the strength to investigate this physical form, the rūpa. Can we see that it's unstable? Have we studied it enough to see it clearly or not? This formation is just a natural condition that has the nature to fluctuate and change. There is nothing wrong or irregular with it; actually it can't be any other way. Can we see this yet?

This physical body has pain riddled all through it as a normal condition, has constant change and instability as its nature, has old age as an inseparable part of it, and eventually has to break down and disappear. It's just like this.

We are born into this human realm and have a form again. It has to follow this process. Born like this in every realm; in every life it has to be like this. And it's not just like this for humans — devatās (celestial beings) have saṅkhāra as well. They have rūpa saṅkhāra but it's called opapātika, that is spontaneously born in a fine material form. Still, their bodies have to break apart the same as ours. They can't just remain for time immemorial, because they are also saṅkhāra-dhātu (the conditioned element).

But there is also another side of this called asaṅkhata-dhātu, the unconditioned element ... that is nibbāna. Nibbāna is reality. It is something that is there, but we can't locate it in any fixed place or direction. It isn't a destination on any conventional plane, because it's empty. It is emptiness that can't be measured in size. This state of emptiness has no defining place, it has no colour, but it's there. It's the truth ... right here ... reality.

Nibbāna is the only thing that is ever really here because it's the only thing that is lasting and permanent. It doesn't change or fluctuate, because it has no supporting conditions. It isn't any form of saṅkhāra, it is *visaṅkhāra*². But it's there, they exist together. When we have saṅkhāra s existing, *visaṅkhāra* must also exist alongside. This is reality.

By Ajahn Anan Akincano
Reference: Sotapattimagga
(The Path of the Sotapanna)

² *Visaṅkhāra: the five aggregates. That which is not conditioned and does not change.*



EVIL BEGETS EVIL

Mind is the forerunner of (all evil) states.

Mind is chief; mind-made are they.

*If one speaks or acts with wicked mind,
because of that, suffering follows one,
even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox.*

An Arahant who had lost his eyesight (Cakkhupāla)

One day, Venerable Cakkhupāla who was blind came to pay homage to the Buddha at the Jetavana monastery. While he was pacing up and down in meditation, he accidentally stepped on some insects. In the morning, some bhikkhus visiting him found the dead insects. They thought ill of him and reported the matter to the Buddha. When questioned by the Buddha whether they had seen Cakkhupāla killing the insects, they answered in the negative. The Buddha then admonished them, 'Just as you had not seen him killing, so also he had not seen those living insects. Besides, being an Arahant he had no intention of killing, and was not guilty of committing an unwholesome act.' On being asked why Cakkhupāla was blind, the Buddha revealed the following story to explain the nature of kammic effects.

Cakkhupāla had been a physician in one of his past existences. Once, he had deliberately made a woman patient blind. That woman had promised to become his servant together with her children if her eyes were completely cured. Fearing that she and her children would have to become servants, she lied to the physician. She told him that her eyes were getting worse when, in fact, they were perfectly cured. The physician knew she was deceiving him, so in revenge, he gave her another ointment which made her totally blind. As a result of this evil deed the physician lost his eyesight many times in his later existences.

The Buddha then commented that an evil deed committed will follow the evildoer just like a wheel follows the hoof of the ox that bears the yoke.

GOOD BEGETS GOOD

Mind is the forerunner of (all good) states.

Mind is chief; mind-made are they.

*If one speaks or acts with pure mind,
because of that, happiness follows one,
even as one's shadow that never leaves.*

Why cry for the moon? (Maṭṭha Kuṇḍali)

Mattha Kundali was a young brahmin, whose father was very stingy and never gave anything in charity. Even the gold ornaments for his only son were made by himself to save payment for workmanship. When his son was suffering from jaundice, no physician was consulted until it was too late. When he realised that his son was dying, he had the youth carried outside to the verandah so that people coming to his house would not see his possessions.

On that morning, the Buddha arising early from his deep meditation of compassion, saw, in his Net of Knowledge, Mattha Kundali lying in the verandah. So when entering Savatthi for almsfood with his disciples, the Buddha stood near the door of Mattha Kundali's house. The Buddha sent forth a ray of light to attract the attention of the youth, who was facing the interior of the house. The youth saw the Buddha. He was very weak and he could only profess his faith and thereby gained some happiness. But that was enough. When he passed away with his heart in devotion to the Buddha he was reborn in the Tavatimsa celestial world.

From his celestial abode he saw his father crying and mourning over him at the cemetery. He appeared to the old man in the likeness of his old self. He told his father not to cry for him like crying for the moon and told him about his rebirth in the Tavatimsa world and advised him to approach the Buddha, offer alms and listen to the Buddha's sermon. The old man did as he was told and after the sermon, the question was brought up as to whether one could be reborn in a celestial world simply by mentally professing profound faith in the Buddha, without practising charity or observing the moral precepts. So the Buddha willed that Mattha Kundali should appear in person, in his celestial glory and told them about his rebirth in the Tavatimsa world. Only then did the listeners become convinced that the young man had attained much glory by simply devoting his mind to the Buddha.

At the end of the discourse, the old man realised the Dhamma and donated most of his wealth to the cause of the Dhamma.

EARNESTNESS LEADS TO SOVEREIGNTY

Maghava, the king of gods, attained such great supremacy over the gods through needfulness.

Heedfulness is always praised and heedlessness is always blamed.

How Magha became Sakka*

One day, a Licchavi prince named Mahāli, came to listen to a religious discourse given by the Buddha. The discourse given was *Sakkapañha Sutta*. The Buddha spoke of Sakka vividly in glowing terms; so, Mahāli thought that the Buddha must have personally met Sakka. To confirm this he asked the Buddha who replied, 'Mahāli, I do know Sakka; I also know what has made him a Sakka.' He then told Mahāli that Sakka, king of the devas, ** was in a previous existence a young man by the name of Magha, in the village of Macāla. The youth Magha and his thirty-two companions had undertaken many socially useful tasks such as building roads and rest houses. Magha took it upon himself also to observe seven obligations. These seven obligations were carried out throughout his life:

- he would support his parents,
- he would respect the elders,
- he would be gentle of speech,
- he would avoid back-biting,
- he would not be avaricious, but would be generous,
- he would speak the truth, and,
- he would restrain himself from losing his temper.

It was because of his enormous good deeds and right conduct in that existence that Magha was reborn as Sakka, king of the devas.

* Sakka is synonymous with Magha king of the gods. This story is related in detail in the *Maghamānavaka Jātaka*.

** *Devas* (Lit sporting or shining ones) are a class of beings with subtle physical bodies invisible to the naked eye. They live in the celestial planes. There are also earth-bound deities.



A monk's robe

The robe is very important for the monk. If there is no robe, there will be no monk. The robes worn by Theravada monks today are thought to be unchanged from the original robes of about 2600 years ago.

To know the history of the robe, let's look back at the life of Buddha. Prince Siddhattha went to the forest to become a monk when he was 29 years old. There was no robe or other requisition at that time. Where did he get the robe? He cut his hair and Ghatikara Brahma came down from heaven to offer robe and other things to him. This was how our Bodhisattva got to become monk.

According to Buddhist scriptures, where the world began to appear, there were complete sets of robes and lotus flowers for the Buddhas who will appear in the kalpa (Auspicious Aeon). For example, if these were to be seven Buddhas in this Kalpa (Auspicious Aeon), there would be seven complete robe sets and seven lotus flowers for them. People can also know how many

Buddhas will appear in this Kalpa by seeing the number of lotus flower and robes Brahmans keep in their Brahma abode. In this Buddha world, there will be five buddhas and our Siddharta Gotama Buddha is forth Buddha. So there is still one complete robe set in the Brahma abode for future Arimetteye Buddha. The Bodhisattva took meditation in the forest for about 6 years. He got enlightenment and became the Buddha under the Bodhi tree. After enlightenment the Buddha gave the Dhammacakka Sutta to the five ascetics or hermits. After his speech, hermit Kondannna attained Arahantship. He requested the Buddha to become a monk. How hermit Kondannna got a robe to become a monk? The Buddha saw his past lives and if he was qualified to be a monk. The Buddha said "Ehi bhikkhu" which means that a person becomes a monk automatically. This was how the first five monks (Pancavaggi) got the robe and other monk's requisites.





Later, after listening to the Dhamma from the Buddha, many lay people requested Buddha to make robes for the monks.

Buddha allowed his disciple to have “triple robe” (tricivara) comprising an upper robe (uttarasanga), an inner garment or waistcloth (antaravasaka), and outer robe (sanghati).

The uttarasanga is the most prominent robe. It is a large rectangle, about 6 by 9 feet. It can be wrapped to cover both shoulders, but most often it is wrapped to cover the left shoulder but leave the right shoulder and arm bare.

The antaravasaka is worn under the upper robe. It is wrapped around the waist like a sarong, covering the body from waist to ankle.

The third robe, the outer robe (sanghati), was permitted by the Buddha for additional use. It is for use during the cold season. Unlike the upper robe which is only of one layer, the outer robe has two. When not in use, it is sometimes folded and draped over a shoulder.

In the beginning, the Buddha taught the early monks to make their robes out of cloth that no one wanted, including cloth that had been chewed by rats or oxen, scorched by fire, soiled by childbirth or menstrual blood, or used as a shroud to wrap the dead before cremation. Monks would scavenge cloth from rubbish heaps and cremation grounds. Any part of the cloth that was unusable was trimmed away, and the cloth was washed. It was dyed, boiled with vegetable matter such as tree and bark.

According to the Pali tradition, six kinds of cloth are allowed for making the robe: plant fibres, cotton, silk, animal hair (e.g. wool, but not human), hemp and a mixture of some or all of them. The Buddha recommended that the robe design should be cut in the pattern of the paddy-fields. Therefore, to this day many of the individual garment worn by Theravada monks are made of strips of cloth sewn together in this traditional pattern.

By Ashin Dhammissara





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