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Dhamma Discourse III

By

The Venerable Webu Sayadaw

*Translated from the Burmese by
Roger Bischoff*



BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

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Introduction

T

he Webu Sayadaw was born on the 17th of February 1896 in Ingyinbin, a small village near Shewbo in upper Burma. He was ordained as a novice at the age of nine and was given the name Shin Kumāra. At the age of twenty he was ordained as a full member of the Sangha, now being addressed as U Kumāra. (“Webu Sayadaw” is a title meaning “the holy teacher from Webu,” given to him after he became an established teacher.)

U Kumāra went to Mandalay to study at the famous Masoyein Monastery, the leading monastic university of the time. In his seventh year after full ordination he abandoned the study of the Pali scriptures and left the monastery to put into practice what he had learned about meditation.

After leaving the monastery, U Kumāra spent four years in solitude. Then he went to his native village Ingyinbin for a brief visit. He taught his former teacher at the village monastery on request the technique of meditation he had adopted. He said: “This is the shortcut to Nibbāna Anyone can use it. It stands up to investigation and is in accordance with

the teachings of the Buddha as observed in the scriptures. It is the straight path to Nibbāna.”

Among the thirteen *dhutaṅga* or “ascetic practices” often taken up by monks living in solitude to combat laziness and indulgence is the practice of never lying down, not even to sleep. The Webu Sayadaw is said to have followed this practice all his life. He taught that effort was the key to success not only in worldly undertakings, but also in meditation, and that sleeping was a waste of time.

The Webu Sayadaw emphasized the practice of meditation as the only way to bring the teachings of the Buddha to fulfillment. The study of the scriptures, though helpful, is not essential for the realization of Nibbāna. The technique of meditation taught by the Webu Sayadaw is *ānāpāna sati*, “mindfulness of breathing,” which requires one to be aware of breathing in while breathing in, of breathing out while breathing out, and of the spot or area which the stream of air touches while the breath is entering and leaving the nostrils. Though *ānāpāna sati* is basically a way of developing *samādhi*, one-pointed concentration of mind, the Webu Sayadaw said that when concentration is developed to a sufficient degree, the meditator can gain insight into the three characteristics of nature—impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self. The direct understanding of these three

characteristics is called *pañña*, wisdom, which is the most essential quality required of a meditator to reach Nibbāna.

The Webu Sayadaw was not a scholar and his discourses do not cater to the intellectual who prefers the study of Buddhist philosophy to the practice. His refreshing simplicity, his patience, his lovely sense of humor, and his humility, all revealed in his dialogue with his audience, illumine a side of Buddhism which cannot be perceived by reading treatises and texts. The statements of the people in the audience offer us a glimpse of how Buddhism is practised in Burma today.

The Webu Sayadaw undertook pilgrimages to the Buddhist sites of India and Sri Lanka. He passed away on the 26th of June 1977 in the meditation centre at his native village Ingyinbin. He was believed by many to have been an Arahāt, a person who has in practice fully understood the Four Noble Truths and attained the end of suffering.

—Roger Bischoff

Dhamma Discourse III

WEBU SAYĀDAW: You have undertaken to keep *sīla*. Having taken up the training in *sīla*, practise it to the utmost. Only if you really practise morality will the aspirations you treasure in your heart be fulfilled completely.

Once you are established in moral conduct, the skilful actions you undertake will result in the fulfilment of your noble aspirations. You believe in the benefits accruing to you from giving charity, and you respect the receiver of your gift. So, straighten your mind and give to the Dhamma which has no peer. Prepare your donations yourselves and prepare them well, without employing others for the purpose.

Giving your gift, you ought to aspire to awakening by saying: “I desire to attain Nibbāna” (*idaṃ me puññaṃ nibbānassa paccayo hotu*). The noble ones who attained Nibbāna according to their aspirations are so numerous that they cannot be counted.

The reality one realizes and knows for oneself after penetrating the Four Noble Truths is called *bodhi*. There are different types of *bodhi*: *sammā-sam-bodhi* (the supreme self-awakening of a teaching Buddha), *pacceka-bodhi* (the self-awakening of a non-teaching

Buddha), and *sāvaka-bodhi* (the awakening of a disciple of a teaching Buddha). The *sāvaka-bodhi* is divided into three levels: *agga-sāvaka-bodhi* (attained by the two chief-disciples), *mahā-sāvaka-bodhi* (attained by the eighty leading disciples) and *pakati-sāvaka-bodhi* (attained by all other Arahats). All of us have to aspire to Nibbāna, the highest blessing. Why can you bring your aspirations to Nibbāna to fulfilment now? Because the time is right, your form of existence is right, and because of the fact that all virtuous people who put forth effort can fulfil their aspirations.

The right time is the time when a Buddha arises and the time during which his teachings are available. All those who are born in the human plane or in a celestial plane are said to have the right birth. Now you have to fulfil your aspirations through your own effort.

See to it that you bring your work to a conclusion in the way so many before you have done. Once they reached their goal they were truly happy not only for a short time, or for one lifetime, but for all the remaining lives. [1]

Now that you do have this aspiration for Nibbāna, do not think that you can't attain to such happiness or that you can't fulfil such a high aspiration. Establish energy and effort sufficiently strong for you to reach the goal. If you do so, you will beyond all doubt

realize your aspiration at the right time.

What will you know once you have done the work that has to be done? At the time of the Buddha, people, devas, and brahmās went to him to pay their respects. But no human being, deva, or brahmā was satisfied just by being in the presence of the Buddha and by paying homage to him. So, the Buddha out of compassion wanted to teach them what he had discovered and understood for himself. This communicating of his knowledge we call preaching. When the Buddha preached, in one split second many people, devas, and brahmās attained what they had been aspiring to.

Knowing that this is the right time and the right form of existence, we should establish awareness as the wise people did before us and thus we can experience the fulfilment of our aspirations.

What are the teachings of the Buddha? The monks and the wise people have passed on the teachings of the Buddha to you out of great compassion. Every time you were instructed, you understood some of it, according to your capability to understand. You know that the teachings are enshrined in the Tipiṭaka, the Three Baskets. You know: “This is from the Sutta-piṭaka. This is from the Vinaya-piṭaka. This is from the Abhidhamma-piṭaka.” All of you know a lot about the

teachings.

The holy scriptures are very extensive. Even though the wise read, study, and teach these scriptures without interruption, they are too extensive for one person to study and understand them completely. It is impossible for one person to master the whole of the scriptures because these contain all the teachings of the Buddha. They are complete, wanting in nothing. They represent what the Buddha has penetrated and understood for himself. The teachings contained in the Tipiṭaka are the only way of escape from suffering, and the monks, having understood this for themselves, out of compassion point this out to you again and again. But can the wise people expound all of the sacred scriptures to you, so that not a single aspect is left out?

DISCIPLE: No, sir, this is impossible.

SAYĀDAW: How long would it take to expound all the teachings of the noble ones? How many days would you have to sit and talk in order to cover all the teachings of the noble ones that are remembered?

The purpose of all these teachings is to show the path to the end of suffering. You know quite enough of the teachings of the Buddha. In all these manifold aspects of the teachings you have to take up one and study it with perseverance. If you focus your mind on

one single object, as the wise of old did, does it not stay with that object?

D: It does, sir.

S: So, select one instruction for meditation out of the many different ones the Buddha gave, and work with it, being aware always. Work with as much effort and determination as the disciples of the Buddha did in the past. If you focus your mind on one object, it will give up its habit of wandering off to objects it desires. When you are thus capable of keeping your mind on one single object, can there still be greed which is the cause of unhappiness?

D: When the mind is stable, there is no greed, sir.

S: Is there aversion?

D: No, sir.

S: Can there be delusion?

D: No, sir.

S: If there is no liking, disliking, and delusion, can there be fear, worry, and agitation?

D: No, sir.

S: If there is no fear, worry, and agitation, will you be happy or unhappy?

D: There will be happiness, sir.

S: If you choose an object of meditation given by the Buddha and practise with strong effort, will the *virīya-iddhipāda* factor hesitate to arise in you?

D: It will not fail to come, sir.

S: As soon as you establish yourselves in effort, the *virīya-iddhipāda* factor will arise. But we are good at talking about the teachings. Let us instead put forth effort right away. The *virīya-iddhipāda* factor will arise immediately. This is called *akāliko*, the immediate result that arises here and now. It doesn't arise because we think or know about it, but only because of practice. So then, focus your entire attention at the spot below the nose above the upper lip. Feel your in-breath and your out-breath, and feel how it touches at the spot below the nose and above the upper lip.

I think you had your mind's attention focused on the spot even before I finished giving the instructions?

D: I don't think all were able to do that, sir.

S: Well, all understood what I said.

D: Some don't know yet how they have to practise, sir.

S: Oh my dear ... you all have learned so much in the past. The monks taught you with great compassion time and time again, and you have grasped their instructions intelligently. When I told

you to concentrate on the spot with strong determination and not to let your mind wander, you said it did stay with the breath, didn't you?

D: Those who had focused their mind on the spot answered, "It does stay, sir," but there are young people in the audience who have never heard the Dhamma before.

S: Did I say anything you haven't heard before? All of you are great lay disciples and have come so many times. All of you are capable of preaching the Dhamma yourselves.

D: Not all are, sir. Some don't know anything yet.

S: Can you others accept what he just told me?

D: Sir, I'm not talking about those people over there, I'm talking about some people not known to me.

S: In what I tell you there is nothing I have found out myself. I am only repeating to you what the Buddha preached. What the Buddha taught is without exception perfect, complete. What I preach is not complete. What the Buddha preached includes everything. His teachings are wanting in nothing, but what I am able to convey may be lacking in many aspects. Would I be able to give you all the teachings in their completeness?

D: No, sir, you can't tell us everything.

S: Well, all of you understand what the Suttas are, what the Vinaya is, and what the Abhidhamma is. Because your teachers have instructed you out of great compassion, you also understand the short and the more extensive explanation of *samatha* and *vipassanā*. But whether you know all this or not, all of you breathe, big and small, men and women. One may know all about the Pāli scriptures, but nothing about his own breath. Don't all of you breathe in and out?

D: We do breathe, sir.

S: When do you start breathing in and out?

D: When we are born, sir.

S: Do you breathe when you sit?

D: Yes, sir.

S: Do you breathe in and out when you stand upright?

D: Yes, sir.

S: When you are walking?

D: We breathe in and out then too, sir.

S: Do you breathe when you are eating, drinking, and working to make a living?

D: Yes, sir.

S: Do you breathe when you go to sleep?

D: Yes, sir.

S: Are there times when you are so busy that you have to say, “Sorry, I have no time to breathe now, I’m too busy”?

D: There isn’t anybody who can live without breathing, sir.

S: In that case all of you can afford to breathe in and out. If you pay close attention, can you feel where the breath touches when you breathe? Can you feel where the air touches when it comes out of the nostrils?

D: I can feel where it touches, sir.

S: And when the the air enters, can’t you feel at which point this feeble stream of air touches?

D: I can, sir.

S: Now, try to find out for yourselves at which spot the air touches gently when it goes in and when it comes out. Where does it touch?

D: It touches at a small spot at the entrance of the nostrils when it enters, sir.

S: Does the air also touch there when it comes out?

D: Yes, sir, it touches at the same spot when it comes out.

S: Wise people of the past have practised this

awareness of the breath as the Buddha instructed them, and because they passed on the teachings, you too have understood now.

If you were to put your finger on the small spot under the nose, could you then feel that spot?

D: Yes, sir, I can feel it.

S: You can actually feel it when you touch it. Do you still have to talk about it?

D: No, sir, we can feel it even without talking about it.

S: As you can feel the spot when you touch it with your finger, you can also feel it when the breath touches there when it enters and leaves the nostrils. If you can feel it for yourselves, do you still have to talk about it?

D: No, sir, we don't have to.

S: If you put your finger on the spot, do you feel the touch sensation with interruptions or continuously?

D: It is a continuous touch, sir.

S: Is the stream of air entering or leaving ever interrupted?

D: No, sir.

S: As the air streams in and out we know its

continuous flow and the continuous touch resulting from it. Don't follow the air to that side.

D: What do you mean by that, sir?

S: Don't let go of the sensation produced by the breath touching the skin. Remain with the awareness of touch. Don't follow the stream of air inside or outside. And why? If you do that, you won't be able to feel the touch sensation. So, let's stay with the awareness of the spot without a break.

D: Do we have to be aware of the touch of air in both nostrils or just in one?

S: Feel only one. If you try to feel two places your attention will be split. Put your undivided attention on one spot. Does your mind stay at the spot?

D: Most of the time it does, sir.

S: But not all the time?

D: Most of the time it stays, but at times the sound of coughing interrupts the continuity.

S: Is it your own coughing or is it someone else's?

D: It's someone else coughing, sir.

S: Does this disturb you because you put in too little effort or too much effort? Is the person who coughs to be blamed?

D: Well, sir, to be honest, I get a little bit angry.

S: Let's have a look at this. You have come to the Buddha to escape from suffering. Having received his teachings you begin to practise. Then someone coughs and you are upset. But of course, if you meditate, as you are doing now, people will consider you to be a good person and they will praise you. But tell me, if this good person becomes angry just before he dies, where will he be reborn?

D: He will fall into the four lower planes.

S: Yes, you should not allow this to happen. You shouldn't be impatient and short tempered. You are practising in order to escape from suffering. Hearing this coughing you should be very happy. You should say "thank you." After all, the person who is coughing shows you that your effort isn't firm enough. If you want to escape from suffering, you have to do better than this. With this type of effort, you won't make it.

We should immediately put in more effort. If we work with more determination, will we still hear this coughing?

D: No, sir, not with good effort.

S: And if there are many people, all talking loudly, will we still hear them?

D: If our effort is not of the right type, we will, sir.

S: Should we become angry at them if we hear them?

D: Most times I do get angry, sir.

S: You should not allow this to happen. You should not be short tempered. You should think of the people who disturb you as being your friends: “They are concerned with my welfare, I should thank them. I don’t want everyone to know that my effort is so weak. I will meditate and improve myself and if they begin to talk still louder, I have to put in even more effort.” If we improve ourselves until we are equal in effort to the wise who have practised before us, we will attain the goal to which we aspired.

If you don’t hear any sounds at all, you become filled with pride, thinking that your effort is perfect. That is why we should be very happy if someone disturbs us. If we go to another place, there may be disturbances again. If we change from one place to another, we just lose time. But if we establish our mindfulness firmly, do we still have to change place or complain to others?

D: No, sir.

S: Is it not proper to say “thank you” to those who disturb us? They help us to learn how to overcome our wishes and desires, and we have to thank all who are our friends. If our effort becomes as strong as that of

our teachers, we will not hear anything any more. We will be aware of one thing only: this small spot and the touch sensation. Once we have gained good awareness of this, we will apply our attention fully to this awareness.

If we attain to the happiness to which we aspire through this practice, are the contents of the Tipiṭaka, the ten pāramīs, the three-fold training, the aggregates, the sense bases, and the relative and ultimate truths not all contained in this awareness?

D: Yes, sir, the awareness of this touch sensation contains everything that the Buddha taught.

S: You have been talking about the three Piṭakas, about the Four Noble Truths, about mind and matter, and other technical terms. But do you actually know how to distinguish between mind and matter? Is the small spot under your nose mind or matter?

D: It is matter, sir.

S: And what is the awareness of the spot?

D: That is mind, sir.

S: And if you are as clearly aware of this spot under your nose as when you touch it with your finger?

D: Then we are aware of mind and matter, sir.

S: Is it good or bad to be aware of mind and matter

simultaneously?

D: It is good, sir.

S: Is this called understanding or ignorance?

D: It is understanding, sir.

S: And what if we don't have this awareness?

D: Then we live in ignorance, sir.

S: Which is more powerful, knowledge or ignorance?

D: Knowledge has more power, sir.

S: Yes, it is understanding that has power. The whole of the cycle of birth and death is full of ignorance, but now that you have received the teachings of the Buddha, be aware. Skilful people gain awareness because they are able to accept the teachings of the Buddha and direct their attention here only. As they gain awareness, knowledge comes to them. When you are aware in this way, what happens to ignorance?

D: It is cut off and disappears, sir.

S: Where can we find it, if we look out for it?

D: It is gone, sir.

S: Though ignorance has had so much power over you in the past of saṃsāra, when you receive the

teachings of the Buddha and achieve understanding, you don't even know where your ignorance has gone. So, really, understanding has much more power than ignorance, and still you complain that ignorance has such a strong hold over your minds.

D: But, sir, we have been associated with ignorance for so long that we are reluctant to let go of it.

S: Still, if you apply the teachings of the Buddha, ignorance will disappear. Which of the two is more agreeable to you?

D: For us, sir, ignorance is more agreeable.

S: Would you like to sustain a state of understanding?

D: Yes, sir, but we can't let go of ignorance.

S: Does ignorance force its way into your mind?

D: We call it into our minds by force, sir.

S: All of you have had an education, and you know many things about the teachings of the Buddha, and you can talk about them, and you practise them. You meditate and keep up your awareness all the time. But tell me, what preparations do you have to make in order to meditate?

D: We have to take a cushion and a mat to lie down, sir.

S: If you have all these things, will your meditation be good as a matter of course?

D: We have to stay away from other people too, sir.

S: What happens if you are negligent?

D: We fall asleep, sir.

S: You are disciples of the Buddha. You know that ignorance is your enemy. And though you know that, you start meditating only after preparing a bed for yourself. After meditating for some time you will become bored, and sloth and torpor will creep in. What will you do then?

D: We will endure them.

S: And if sloth and sleepiness are very strong, will you still resist?

D: No, sir, we will say to them, "Now only you come!"

S: Yes, that's just like you! "Now only do you come! I have had the bed ready for a long time." That's what you are going to think, aren't you?

D: Yes, sir.

S: When will you wake up again after going to sleep?

D: We will get up when it is day and time for

breakfast, sir.

S: If you go on speaking in this way, this will have the effect that the dangers of ignorance will never be overcome. You don't praise understanding and wisdom, but ignorance. If you work like this, will you ever obtain the happiness to which you have aspired?

D: No, sir.

S: Will you just pretend to work then?

D: If we just pretend, we won't get anywhere, sir.

S: So, if you can't achieve your goal, what will you do?

D: I think we will have to continue with this practice until we reach the goal, sir.

S: Good. Yes, you know the difference between understanding and ignorance. Knowing what to do to achieve understanding, focus your attention on the spot and then keep it there. If you live with this awareness, do you still have to fear and be worried about the moment of death?

D: No, sir.

S: Tell me, what happens if you die without this awareness?

D: I will be reborn in one of the four lower planes.

S: Do you want this to happen?

D: No, sir.

S: Do you really not want to go, or are you telling me a lie?

D: You are right, sir, I have fallen into telling lies. I am walking on the path that leads straight to the lower worlds. I am speaking only empty words when I say that I don't want to go to hell and am still staying on the broad highway leading downwards.

S: Very good. You have understood. If you know for yourself whether you have got some understanding or not, then you are on the right path. If you know when you don't understand, you have understood. But if you think you have understood though you haven't understood a thing, then there is not the slightest hope for you to acquire any understanding.

You see, he knows that he is lazy when he is lazy; he knows that he is useless when he is useless. If you can see yourself in the correct light, then you will achieve understanding, because you are able to correct yourselves.

"I don't want to go to the lower worlds. Well, with all the meditation I'm doing I'll be alright. After all it doesn't take that much." Do you still think in this way, assuming that you needn't work much anymore,

when really you do?

D: No, sir, I don't take what is wrong to be right and what is right to be wrong.

S: If you firmly fix your attention on the spot and are aware of mind and matter, you practise understanding. If you have no awareness, you are living in ignorance. If you die with your mind steeped in ignorance, you will go down, even if you are observing the Uposatha precepts. Tell me, where would you be reborn if you happened to be at a pagoda or under a Bodhi tree when you die?

D: Wherever I am, if I can't concentrate my mind when I die, I will go down, sir.

S: What about monks? Suppose I think, "Ha, my stock of merit is quite great, much greater than the merit of those lay people," and then I wander about here and there with a smile on my face. If I were to die, where would I be reborn?

D: We don't dare to say anything about monks, sir.

S: You needn't say anything about monks, just take me as an example.

D: Sir, we would dare even less say anything about you.

S: I'm assuming that my mind wouldn't stay with

any object and I had to die, what would happen, my disciple?

D: Sir, I don't think there is a time when you are not aware of this spot.

S: But if I were to die without this awareness?

D: If it were me, I would fall into the lower planes.

S: Whoever it is, if there is no awareness at the moment of death, the result will be rebirth in hell. Therefore, establish your mindfulness so that you never forget this small spot. If I were to wish to be reborn in hell after having reached complete understanding due to this awareness, would there be a possibility of my going to hell?

D: Such a wish couldn't come true, sir.

S: If we don't understand what should be understood, and then start praying for Nibbāna, will we get it?

D: No, sir. However long we pray for Nibbāna, we will go down.

S: Ignorance leads to the four lower worlds. But if you take up this training of awareness of in-breath and out-breath, you will gradually develop towards the attainment of Nibbāna to which you have aspired. So, place your attention at this small spot steadfastly

so that it doesn't budge.

S: Isn't it possible for you to fix your mind on this small spot while you are sitting in front of me?

D: It is, sir.

S: Can it be done while standing and walking?

D: Yes, sir.

S: Can you practise while eating, drinking, or working?

D: It is possible, sir.

S: Can you practise Ānāpāna when you are alone?

D: Yes, sir.

S: Or when you are in a crowd?

D: Even then it is possible to keep up the awareness, sir.

S: Do you get tired if you keep your attention at the spot all the time?

D: No, sir, it is not tiresome.

S: Does it cost you anything?

D: No, sir, it doesn't cost anything.

S: Is your work interrupted or disturbed?

D: No, sir, it isn't.

S: Are you more efficient in your work if you let your mind wander here and there or if you keep your attention focused on the spot?

D: It takes the same amount of time, sir.

S: Who is more efficient, the one with a wandering mind or the one who keeps his mind under control?

D: The one who keeps his attention at the spot does his job, and at the same time he is working for the attainment of Nibbāna.

S: One may earn one hundred thousand, but the one who works and practises awareness at the same time earns twice as much. From now on you will earn two hundred thousand. But, tell me, when we make our mind firm and tranquil, will our reward be only this much?

D: No, sir, when the mind is clear it becomes stable, firm, and strong.

S: The housewives here are surely all experienced in cooking. You have to cook at times though you are very tired.

D: Yes, sir, at times we just stare into the fire and nod from fatigue. Then the rice is burned sometimes, sir.

S: Why does this happen?

D: Because our mind is not on the job, sir. Just yesterday I was thinking of some scene I had seen in a show and I burned the rice, sir. If my mind didn't wander, I would be able to do my work more quickly, and I wouldn't burn the food.

S: What happens if you eat rice that isn't properly cooked?

D: Some people get an upset stomach, sir.

S: If you cook in a haphazard manner, you are slow, you get tired easily, and the food isn't good. The fire burns down, and you have to kindle it anew. The water for the rice cools down, and you have to bring it to a boil again. Nothing is improved by not being attentive. When we improve our awareness, so many other things improve. I am only telling you what the Buddha taught, but of course I can't tell you all he taught. There are many more advantages resulting from this practice. The Buddha's teachings are complete and without a flaw. It is impossible to teach every aspect of the Dhamma. But if you keep your attention focused on the spot and are aware from moment to moment, then you will reach your goal. The Buddha did teach this, and the wise people of old did reach their goal by this practice, and yet there are many things the Buddha realized that are not contained in this. But you can reach your goal if you

keep knowing in-breath and out-breath at the spot. You will become really happy.

I am talking only about this little spot. You know all the theories about meditation for tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight meditation (*vipassanā*) and how they come about. Yes, there is samatha and there is vipassanā, but the Buddha did say that you have to establish yourselves well in one practice:

If you practise one, you accomplish one.

If you practise one, you accomplish two.

If you practise one, you accomplish three.

But these are mere words. We have to practise with effort equal to the effort of the wise people of old.

When we teach the Dhamma we have to distinguish between Sutta, Abhidhamma, and Vinaya according to the established order, but only after having practised meditation to the same extent and with the same effort as the noble disciples of the Buddha will you really be able to explain the teachings.

Though I have explained the technique to you in the proper way, some of you may remain closed to it and without understanding. If I ask you about the house in which you are living, you will describe it to me accurately. If I were to think and ponder about your house, would I be able to visualize how it really is?

D: No, sir.

S: If I were to think and ponder all day and all night without even sleeping, would I find out about your house?

D: No, sir.

S: Tell me then, how can I find out for myself what your house looks like?

D: If you come to my house yourself, you will immediately know all about it even if no one says a word to you.

S: So, you too should proceed in such a way that you reach your goal. When you get there you will know, "Ah, this is it." Will you continue to put off practising? No, of course not. You can attain the Dhamma here and now.

Understanding all this, practise, make effort. You told me just now that meditation doesn't tire you. You said that it didn't cost anything, it didn't disrupt your work, and that you were able to practise it while alone and while you are with your family. Can you still find excuses for not practising, or are you going to continue living in the same way as you have been, without even trying to find excuses?

D: Most of the time we just carry on as usual, sir.

S: Those who take up this practice will receive the answers to their questions. So, keep your mind focused and your cooking will be done quickly; the rice is not going to be burned, and no wood is wasted. Your whole life will improve, and the time will simply fly.

There is right conduct, and there is understanding. Both are important. Right conduct is the fulfilment of your manifold duties and your giving of the four requisites for the support and furthering of the Buddha's teaching. The control over your mind gives you understanding.

There are these two elements of training, and you have to train yourselves in both simultaneously. Is it not possible to be aware of the breath while you are preparing and giving the four requisites to the community of monks?

D: It is possible, sir.

S: Under which of the two disciplines does sweeping fall?

D: Sweeping is part of right conduct.

S: Can't you keep your attention at the spot while you are sweeping?

D: We can, sir.

S: Under which of the two trainings does serving your parents fall, to whom you are deeply indebted for the love, compassion, and support they have given you?

D: That is right conduct, sir.

S: What do you accomplish if you keep your attention focused at the spot while you are serving and helping your parents?

D: We develop our understanding, sir.

S: So you can train yourselves both in right conduct and understanding at the same time. Sometimes you may say that you can't meditate, though you would like to, because you can't ignore your old father and mother. Does this happen to you?

D: Young people often think in this way and put off meditation, sir.

S: What about older people?

D: They often say they can't meditate because they have to look after their children, sir.

S: To fulfil our duties is part of moral conduct. If you don't fulfil your duties, your conduct is not perfect. At the same time that you fulfil your duties, admonishing your children, for example, you can train yourself in the awareness of the spot. Isn't this

wonderful? Now you have the time to train yourselves in both moral conduct and understanding.

Venerate and respect your benefactors—your parents, your teachers, and the community of monks—without ever resting. From now on work without ever resting, with firm effort, as the wise of old did before you. Your aspirations will be realized as were the aspirations of the wise disciples of the Buddha.

Notes

1. *Ariyas*, people who have experienced Nibbāna, have only a limited number of lives remaining until they reach the end of all suffering. [\[Back\]](#)

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